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RAYMOND POSTGATE
REFLECTIONS ON
MAYDAY 1948¹

THE 'principles of 1848' has for long been an old-fashioned and faintly ridiculous phrase. While the men of '48 were still alive—the old Chartist, the companions of Garibaldi, the German emigrants who kept American politics from their final corruption—respect for their personality held criticism to a minimum. 'Leonine' was the commonest, almost the obligatory, adjective for them: not till they were dead did men care to remember Tennyson's suppressed comment on the lion-headed Garibaldi—that the lion has a rather stupid expression. Thereafter, and for many years now, Mazzini has been a moralizing prig, Kossuth an unsuccessful actor who borrowed money too often from his friends, Ledru Rollin the archetype of all incompetent parliamentarians, and William Smith O'Brien, a disastrous comedian whose 'revolution' was a scuffle in a cabbage patch.

This ignoble fate, of the persons and the principles, was due to two things. First, that in history they came at a turning point: the men did not observe the turning point at all; their principles they neither could nor would rephrase to meet it. Secondly, the two ablest minds which studied the subject at all, those of Marx and Engels, did not even attempt to rephrase them. They decided that they must be destroyed. They laid down what they believed (and two generations following them have believed) to be the philosophical principles and practical programme of the revolution; and these involved a complete break not only with the principles of 1848, but with the principles of all earlier revolutionaries.

This decision of theirs is a philosophical error; and, I believe, is at the root of most of the discomforts and defeats of the 'Left' today. Particularly, it is the origin (though not, of course, the only cause) of the misbehaviour of Soviet Russia internationally in the last fifteen years, and of the heartbreaking corruption (I mean mental and spiritual, not financial corruption) of Communist parties everywhere.

¹ This essay, with certain modifications, will form part of a collection *A Hundred Years of Revolution*, to be issued shortly by the Porcupine Press.

I will try to explain what I mean in more detail: I will try not to be pedagogic, though I am afraid it is my nature to be so. It is important to understand this clearly, for Marx and Engels were perfectly right in saying that *in some ways* there had to be a break with 1848. But in some ways only.

* * *

Marx and Engels were born into a society which thought of the Revolution' ('Progress' which sometimes took its place, was not the same idea) as a continuing or at least recurrent thing. It had a calendar of its own: it had great dates of which the earliest is now exactly 300 years old, but the greatest was 1789. It had its 'Days' such as the Days of September, the Days of July, or the Days of February, which at one time every revolutionary recognized at once. Now, this stream ran steadily from 1648 through 1775 to 1789, and then by 1830 to 1848; and was soon to pass by way of 1871 to 1917. But Marx and Engels observed a change in its character. (I hope all these dates mean something to the reader; I am writing in shorthand, I know.)

The two most important elements of change which they observed were that the leaders, and the rank and file, of revolt, would, henceforward, be working-class; and that the object of the revolution would, henceforward, be economic, not political, liberty.

The two propositions read unexcitingly enough; it is hard to realize what an emotional content they once had. The proposition that the Revolution had to become economic—that is to say, it must be Socialist, or nothing—read to many like a sentence of banishment. The parable of the rich young man who went sorrowfully away was repeated again and again, except that it was more usually a middle-aged, middlingly-well-to-do man who found that he was no longer a Radical, and dispiritedly retired from politics, leaving once great figures like Kossuth and Mazzini deserted and uncomprehending. But not only persons, whole areas of human thought and endeavour were ruled out as no longer of interest to the Revolution. When Blanqui, the greatest practical revolutionary of the nineteenth century, had finished fighting in the Revolution of 1830, he burst into the editorial room of the paper on which he had worked. Standing in the doorway he flung down his rifle and shouted with young enthusiasm to the elderly journalists sitting there: '*Enfoncés, les romantiques!*'—'That finishes the Romantics!' For him the

Revolution for which he had just risked his life was not primarily the victory of the republican workers over their oppressors; what first occurred to him was that the ornate romantic style of Chateaubriand, the idealization of the Middle Ages, fake Gothic, and the aping of feudalism, would all now disappear in favour of a purer, classical style, which would model itself, in writing, drama and architecture, on the nobler tradition of Republican Rome. Nothing of this now was to have any meaning for the revolutionary. Strictly, indeed, the conscientious revolutionary would remove from his emotions anger and the love of justice too. For he was merely present, and assisting if he could, at an historical process. The capitalist, the soldier, the worker, even he himself were merely acting as inexorable forces dictated. Why then should anyone be angry? And as for justice, what was justice? Nobody could define it; and when a French worker named Tolain tried to make the International adopt it as a slogan, Marx and Engels drove him out with gross mockery. For they considered the word only an excuse for avoiding connected Socialist thought.

That Marx and Engels themselves obviously had not freed their minds of anger and the love of justice was irrelevant. Men are imperfect; besides, they were unaware that they had not. They were convinced that their attitude was quite dispassionate; and Engels always liked to describe their policy as Scientific Socialism. Marx was pleased to hear his work compared to Darwin's: he never considered that he was in the least degree less unbiased and Olympian than that shy and silent researcher. But their writings are full of the most uncontrolled and savage moral condemnation; the fury that seizes them when writing of Napoleon the Third, the Duchess of Sutherland, or the smallest police spy has nothing whatever to do with science and everything to do with a hatred of tyranny and injustice.

There was in this a curious contradiction, and one which none of their contemporaries was interested to analyse. Subconsciously, it may, of course, have been that a hatred of oppression was assumed by everyone in the circles in which they moved to be a natural emotion, as universal as hunger and love; it was noticed no more than the fact that they breathed air, and required no more explanation. Consciously, it is more likely to have been due to the fact that 'the scientific attitude to Socialism' was integrally connected with the second proposition—that only the workers could

carry on the Revolution—and that proposition seemed proved beyond any question by contemporary facts; and thus oddities of personal behaviour had no importance.

The reasons for this certainty were in broad outline, three; and as one, anyway, is, even at this date, responsible for the 'misery of the Left', they need to be examined in greater detail. Let me treat them, as Marx would have wished, as a scientific thesis; let me tabulate them and take them one by one. They cannot be wholly separated; they interlock; but for our purposes they must be taken one by one. They are: (1) that economic facts, the development of capitalist production, destroy the revolutionary drive of the bourgeoisie and put the proletariat, strategically, in a position that it alone can, and will, carry out the revolution; (2) that the history of revolutionary movements since 1848 shows this change visibly in progress; (3) that the only true philosophical basis of thought, which is compactly called Dialectical Materialism, proves that the process is inevitable and certain, and that it has a special 'triangular' motion of its own.

r. *That the working class is now the only possible revolutionary class.*

The argument for this is most easily followed in the earliest of the papers in which the two writers developed their policy in its mature form—the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847. Later elaborations never varied from it in any significant way. Certain documents, such as Engels' advice to the German Social Democratic Party, have been criticized as being less revolutionary; but even if the criticism were true, no departure from the general thesis is involved. There is nothing contradictory in suggesting that at a given time the revolutionary class might find it pay to play a waiting game, or an evasive game. The argument of the *Manifesto* was expanded, or, rather, the supporting evidence assembled in later publications of which, of course, far the most important is *Capital*. In this unfinished work Marx appeared to prove that the exploitation of the workers by capital at the point of production could be mathematically analysed by the use of the Labour Theory of Value, and that this analysis proved that a recurrent series of crises of increasing violence was wholly inevitable. This process meant that ever-increasing numbers of the workers would become unemployed, at intervals, and that any prospect of a gradual increase in working-class prosperity was nonsensical. Within the

capitalist world, moreover, the larger units of capital would automatically, by a similar mathematically predictable process, wipe out the smaller ones. Thus, those workers who were employed would be employed in ever-larger units, learning the lessons of co-operation and aggregated into platoons and regiments and battalions which would easily become the units of the revolutionary army. Meanwhile, the small employers and the craftsmen who had previously been the rank and file of the earlier revolutions and the Liberal and Radical parties would be crushed out. No longer interested in liberty, equality and fraternity, they would make a brief struggle to retain their economic lives by oppressing the workers even more than their huge rivals, and thereafter would fall with a crash into the ranks of the proletariat themselves. Thus, as a result of a series of convulsions, the time would arrive in which society was sharply divided into a great mass of workers, united in a common misery and organized in large groups, and a very small group of oppressors facing them. Marx remembered with pleasure how 'Nero grinned' when he found that half the Roman province of Africa was owned by six men only. The same imperial grin would be found on the faces of the workers; their task of expropriation would be equally easy. It was the inner contradictions of the capitalist system itself—contradictions which Marx went so far as to express in algebra—that were responsible; the capitalists themselves were producing their own gravediggers.

This remarkable prophecy has been in part fulfilled. That part which deals with the repetition of crises can hardly be denied. It was disproved, to their own satisfaction, by economist after economist before and after World War I; and for some time it did look as if the violent and sudden crises at roughly ten-year intervals were smoothing out into booms and slumps and would in due course become no more than a gentle undulation. The smaller crisis of 1921 and the shattering one of 1931 discomposed the prophets of good. There were very few people who thought about the matter at all in 1939 who were prepared to deny that the capitalist system contained internal contradictions of a most disastrous kind. Indeed they might well say that these had been underestimated—that instead of recurrent attacks of gigantic unemployment and economic paralysis, society had ossified so that that condition was a permanent disease.

Nor was it less true that huge units had continued to press out smaller firms. Larger factories, with greater labour forces, with some set-backs, of course, began to dominate every industry and even the retail trades; and this concentration of capital was a great deal more extensive than the public or even students knew, owing to various devices of interlocking directorates, holding companies, cartel agreements, and so forth. Many a producer or distributor who believed himself still independent was in fact held so tightly by price agreements and arrangements to apportion supplies that he might as well have been a direct employee of the cartel. This had had, too, though not quite so markedly as expected, the effect of passing the employees into large units suitable for organization.

Any description of the economic scenery which was not mere wishful thinking (the anti-Socialist literature of 1900-18 contains some very curious examples of this) confirmed the Marxist diagnosis. Not only were the manufacturing units larger, but the consequent organizations of the workers were spreading into areas once thought unorganizable. It was a matter for no surprise that miners' unions and railwaymen's unions should grow steadily in membership in every industrialized country where they were not suppressed by violence. But from the late '70s onward there was even some organization of farm labourers in England—the most isolated, depressed and helpless of workers. Almost as surprising were embryonic organizations of clerks which appeared in various countries. Even waiters and other catering workers formed a quite powerful body in Australia. In 1923 a reporter, perhaps overcredulous, described the activities of a Harlots' Union in the Ruhr which was taking its share in inconveniencing the trench invaders.

But elsewhere the clear outlines in Marx's picture became blurred by the thumb of time. It was impossible not to observe that these swelling proletarian organizations were not becoming increasingly revolutionary, but rather the reverse; and their members were not becoming increasingly miserable, but rather the reverse. The only proletarian revolution which occurred did not occur, as it should have done, in the most advanced capitalist country, but in the least advanced, Russia; it missed its appointment by two thousand miles. Moreover, and connected with this, a major mistake in economics appeared to have been made. The middle classes were not ground out, and did not disappear into

the mass of the wage-earners. As early as 1899 Eduard Bernstein, a once famous German Socialist economist, established that, judged merely by test of incomes, the middle classes were actually increasing: the 'Revisionism' that he thus sponsored shook the whole Socialist movement.

It had been, as I shall explain later, a philosophical dogma with Marx that there could be only two opposing forces in society. The mere existence of the middle classes was in consequence an inconvenience and this was overcome (dialectically but not in reality) by referring to them as 'the petty bourgeoisie'. This suggested that they were in fact merely a subdivision of the bourgeoisie as a whole, not deserving separate notice. It also incidentally suggested a further error—that what we call the middle classes were pretty much all of one kind; small-sized specimens of capitalists.

The middle classes, as any observer can see today, consisted and consist of more than one different class. Each of these has its particular character and its particular revolutionary potentiality (or lack of it). In 1867, when *Capital* was written, it was perhaps excusable to look on the middle class as one mass—though indeed it should not have been, for twenty years earlier a practical revolutionary, Feargus O'Connor the Chartist, had in a dim way seen the chief division when he divided his opponents into the 'middle' and the 'middling' classes—the first being the employers and traders, the 'shopocracy' whom he was fighting, and the second the brain workers whose aid he hoped for.

Today, that division is not sufficient. We have still the 'petty bourgeoisie' proper with us—the small shopkeeper, the little employer, who with ever-renewed faith opens his shop or his works and with pathetic frequency sees it closed when the Combine stirs itself sufficiently to crush it. Here, and here almost alone can we watch the petty bourgeoisie meeting the fate laid down for it and falling ruined into the proletariat. But there are also, and there always have been, the professional classes; doctors, teachers, dentists, lawyers, and so forth, are very far from being driven into the proletariat. There is also a class which before 1939 had quite remarkable voting power—the small *rentier*. The great aggregations of capital which killed the independent small producer did not find themselves bound to exterminate all people of that income level, as had been expected. On the contrary, the institution of the

joint stock company had made the existence of that section of the community a great convenience to them. The big bourgeois raised the funds he needed from it; he retained control at the price of paying out dividends (and sometimes he even omitted to do that). In that way this section of the middle classes itself provided the means of its dethronement. As a result, you could before the war observe in Britain, France and the States a very considerable number of people, including many women, who were idle but not rich. They were far from being a clear-cut class or caste; many of them worked as well as drew dividends, and only in the confessionals or the bank-parlour could you discover of any given one of them whether his soul was more that of a shareholder than a salary earner.

Still more important was a further section, alien in almost every way from the coupon clippers. The technical men, the managers, the researchers, the administrators, who actually run industry, whether it is privately or publicly owned, have begun recently to assert their importance and even to proffer theories of their own; the most entertaining of these is James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution*.

If we keep these categories in mind, we can go on to test the next general principle, which is:

That the history of revolutionary movements shows that the sole active centre is now the working class.

No proposition seemed more amply proved up to, say, 1933. The earliest revolutionary movements that concern us were directed, and manned, by what might without inaccuracy be called bourgeois. The farmers and the trained bands who fought for Parliament and broke King Charles were men of property—not of great property and gross wealth, but not penniless labourers. So, too, were the members and supporters of the Revolutionary Congress of the American Colonies. So were all the Girondins and most (though not all) of the Jacobins. Right up to the strange year 1848 it was always the men of property who tore down the empire of tyranny and demanded universal legal equality, freedom of speech and of person, and the abolition of the privileges of birth. In February of that year, Paris—by now traditionally the centre—resumed the Revolution in the traditional form by chasing out the King, Louis Philippe. On the news of this success, the

revolutionary spirit flickered over Europe like a flame, spotting capital after capital with light. Berlin, Frankfurt, Cassel, Munich, Vienna, Budapest, Milan, Venice, Rome—in all these cities and many others, capitals of States in that year, the Royal or Papal authority was forced to abandon its power and hand it over to democratic parliaments. Sometimes, as in Prussia, the monarch was forced to apologize for his past misconduct and to cry publicly into a handkerchief to show his contrition.

And within quite a few months the revolution was completely defeated everywhere. The reason was clear: Marx and Engels submitted the political history of the two years 1848 and 1849 to a detailed analysis which is a small masterpiece. In each case, the men of property who had provided the driving force of all previous revolutions and were leading this one, were paralysed in their will by the appearance behind them, as it were, of a new force, the men of no property, who demanded social and economic equality. Rather than consent to this, the French, German, Italian and Austrian revolutionaries came to an accommodation with the powers they had so rudely turned out; and put down the Reds, as they were now called. In Paris, as ever the centre, the Republican general Cavaignac in June manœuvred the working class into a pitched battle in which it was bloodily defeated; and the news of that again set off the European capitals in a reverse process. Outside France, the victory was less sanguinary, but it was equally decisive; the Revolution of '48 was over.

What was foreshadowed then became solid and tangible in the twenty following years. The men of property came to a tacit agreement with royalty and aristocracy. They were to be given a Parliament—a Chamber of Deputies or a Reichstag—with limited powers; they were to be given considerable personal freedom and somewhat less political freedom; all restraints on trade and manufacture were to be ended and vigorous help to be given to all traders and manufacturers. In return, the monarchy was to be accepted and confirmed in power; the good families were to retain their preponderant influence in politics, loyalty was to be encouraged and both sides would unite in putting down the Reds. Under such a regime Victorian Europe lived, and for the most part prospered. At its extreme ends, in Spain and Russia, the men of property were too feeble to enforce the compromise and the scenery remained rather as it had been before 1848.

No other interpretation of history made any sense at all. When revolutionary movement did occur, such as the Paris Commune of 1871, only the working class was found to support it. All reform movements, too, whether for free milk in schools or for a large remodelling of society, henceforward found most of their support in working-class circles and less and less elsewhere. Individuals might behave eccentrically, but practical politicians knew the facts. The questions they asked were simple: 'What voters would support better education for all, social services in the cities, minimum wage laws, extensions of the franchise, liberty for the Colonies?' 'What voters would demand reduction of the rates, stopping of "demoralizing pampering", putting of "niggers" in their places, and so forth?' You could walk round Ebbw Vale and Turbiton, St. Denis and St. Germain, and write your own answer. Therefore, the Revolution was obviously now in the trust of the workers. Violent or peaceful, it would continue through them or not continue at all. If their nerve failed, it would be defeated; if their leaders betrayed, there would be no others to turn to.

Nevertheless, round about 1933 it became clear that the conflict was not a simple two-sided one, with the workers on one side and the men of property and the aristocrats in alliance on the other. The middle classes, with their regrettable lack of unity, complicated the position. The small handful of big capitalists—the equivalent of Nero's African landlords—found forces there which might be their allies. Nothing at all in Marxist thought fore-shadowed Fascism.

Attempts were made to force Fascism into the Marxist system. For example, among the Nazi masses was an element of down and outs, the *Lumpen-proletariat*, the brutalized lowest tenth of society; and propagandists made the most of them. Could it not be proved that Fascists were merely capitalists who had hired some completely degenerate defenders of working-class origin? Not so: for their effective fighting force was made up of people who were not below, but thought themselves a bit above, the workers. They were what Trotsky in his most brilliant phrase called 'human dust'. For a middle-class, or would-be middle-class, man faced with ruin is more helpless and without friends than anyone else. He is a grain of sand, without cohesion or strength. A worker has his union, his co-op, his tradition of mutual help and solidarity and at the worst a more philosophical attitude to hunger and

unemployment. All these the middle-class man lacks; when his children can no longer go to the better-class school, when he can no longer make payment on his house, when he has sold all that he can sell, when he has borrowed the last loan from the men he used to know, then his despair is final. The Fascist Army was recruited from the architects and lawyers and small business men who would never get jobs again and who knew that their children would never get jobs at all. Because the Socialists and Communists, following strictly their dogma, made no provision for these people the German capitalists were able to buy them. Whether they bought a master or a servant when they financed Hitler is a matter there is no room to discuss here. But the existence of these people has an important bearing on the third proposition:

3. *That Dialectical Materialism shows that the victory of the workers is inevitable and is the Negation of the bourgeois revolution.*

A proposition like this has a certain practical use. It gives a kind of Calvinist strength to a rising movement whose members must sometimes quaver at the thought of the power of the forces they have challenged. There is little doubt that certainty of victory nerved Lenin and his colleagues to go straight ahead in 1917 and 1918. But the fact that a belief is useful does not prove it is true; moreover, as in the case of Hyndman and his colleagues in the old British Socialist Party, the same belief may lead only to paralysis. For if victory is certain anyway, why disturb yourself to do more than preach the abstract truth?

And it has long been clear that in its original form Dialectical Materialism is not true. It is modified, sometimes, by modern expositors until it becomes no more than a vague expression of belief in a form of evolution, a statement that nothing comes from nothing, that everything that happens has its source in a previous event which may be of a very different nature. So watered down it is hardly worth drinking, but originally it was a powerful spirit, a political vodka. Marx and Engels, educated as Hegelians by a natural weakness convinced themselves that the philosophy that they had so laboriously learnt was not really valueless. Transposed from the realm of the Ideal to that of Materialism, Hegel's Dialectic would provide the clue to the process of history and since it was a universal proposition, it enabled them to predict the result of what was going on around them.

All historical processes (and, it seems from their writings, all natural processes too) went on, they held, in patterns of three. There was first a Thesis, or Affirmation; this gave rise to an Anti-thesis or Negation. From the conflict of these two arose finally a Synthesis, or Negation of the Negation, which partook of the nature of both of its predecessors. This odd and dry formula had continually repeated itself in history, as for example in the substitution of capitalism for feudalism. It was now in process of working itself out again. The bourgeois revolution, establishing capitalist property-relations, was the Affirmation; the Negation of this was the proletarian revolt; the resultant Synthesis would be Socialism. The conclusion was foregone: the process was inevitable and fore-ordained.

As I have said, few people probably maintain this prophecy as being a certainty. Some do however treat it as being generally a valid statement of past or current fact. And from this belief arises the fundamental error of which I spoke at the beginning.

Taking the three categories we have used here, we may say that Propositions one and two are mainly true; Proposition three not true at all. That is to say, the main opponents in the present class struggles are the workers and the capitalists; and the chief strength (but not all) of the Revolution will be working class. But not only can one not predict the pattern of the revolution; socialist revolution is also *not* the negation of, or opposed to, the preceding Liberal or bourgeois revolution. Not to see this, is the most considerable mistake that a Socialist can make. If the bourgeois revolution is to be followed by a proletarian revolution, and the proletarian revolution is to be its Negation, then the achievements of the first are either worthless or actually to be attacked by the supporters of the new revolution. Marx and Engels drew, theoretically, that deduction; but being trained, as Lenin was too, in the revolutionary tradition, they did not operate it. They treated to the cruellest sarcasm Monsieur Tolain, of the First International, who innocently demanded that its programme (like that of the Jacobins) be based on 'Justice and Virtue'. But in fact they demanded of themselves and of all those whom they worked with, a strict morality and selfless republican devotion that derived immediately from the French Revolution and ultimately from what the French and Americans

believed to have been the standards of Republican Rome. When they abuse Lassalle it is for restless vanity and subservience to titles, unworthy of a Socialist; when they make their chief attack on Bakunin it is on the grounds that he has been dishonest with his colleagues and faked essential votes.

If the Revolution is to be regarded, as I consider it historically must be, as *one continuous stream* then such abuse is sensible and logical. The Rights of Man, as declared by the Estates General in 1789, are an integral part of the Socialist programme. So, too, are the Declaration of Independence, and the Petition of Right. It remains the belief of all Socialists 'that all men are created equal' and that they have as 'inalienable Rights . . . Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' They also believe that 'all who promote, solicit, execute or cause to be executed arbitrary orders ought to be punished' and that 'every citizen may speak, write and publish freely'—and a number of other principles enshrined in texts which their forefathers knew by heart but which they have tended to forget.

The French Declaration of the Rights of Man has seventeen articles. Every one of them would do as a text on which to hand a Socialist sermon. Take, for example, No. 6, a very flat statement at first sight: 'VI. The law is an expression of the will of the community: all citizens have a right to concur either personally or by their representatives in its formation . . .' Observe that it says 'all citizens' (not all Party Members) and does not add conditions as, for example, 'in peace time'. It condemns, implicitly that is, the arrangements by which local elections (for by-laws are 'laws') were prevented in Britain and elsewhere during the war. Citizens, all of them, or at least as many as can be found, have the right to 'concur' in decisions; an election, even a local election, is therefore, not a nuisance but an essential. Similarly, it condemns the long period which elapsed in Russia since the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship without a free election. The abrogation of the forms of formal democracy in order to push through the Soviet revolution was explicitly advocated as a temporary step. Under capitalist conditions, it was argued, democracy had ceased to have any reality: the establishment of a Socialist economy was necessary to enable it to function. Yet to this date it has not returned to function, despite the programme described in Lenin's *State and Revolution*. Trotsky, in the

beginning of his conflict with Stalin, outlined in his *New Currents* a proposal for the restoration of democracy within the Communist Party. But the Declaration does not say 'all Party members' or 'all revolutionaries': it says 'all citizens'. And in any case Trotsky was defeated. The 'Stalin constitution' restored on paper the chief democratic rights. But it was immediately followed by the purges and executions of opponents which resulted from the killing of Kirov; and has never been applied. Indeed it can not be effective so long as only one party is allowed to exist. The French Revolutionaries by contrast continually referred back to their constituents—the National Assembly indeed was so anxious not to invade their rights that it actually barred its members from re-election. Even Cromwell ceaselessly sought a Parliament with which he could work; his principles were right even if they were continually thwarted by the violence of his temperament. Only the theory that previous revolutionary policy was not merely outmoded but actually wrong would have permitted a quarter century to pass in Russia without the handing back of effective power to the citizens. The canons, the authorities, were against it; not till they were overturned could it be done.

'The authorities', I see I have written. It is a misleading phrase, for there is no appeal to authority. The essence of the Revolution is that it does not appeal to authority ever—that is, to any other authority than human reason. 'No Master, high or low' William Morris considered to be the only ultimately tolerable motto, and that applies to intellectual and spiritual as well as economic masters. These texts which I mentioned are only 'authorities' in the sense that they conveniently and briefly outline what we know already and have satisfied ourselves is true; their chief reason for existence is that they save time. A man cannot always spare the time to argue out from first causes the rights and wrongs of each question as it comes along, any more than he can always inquire whether the dictionary is right in the meaning it gives to any particular word. Quite clearly, too, some of them have been found as time went on to be inconsistent with themselves: the main discovery of the Socialist movement is that an unlimited right to property is inconsistent with the preservation of liberty and equality.

In France, where 'the Revolution' is a technical historical term which does not have the violent overtones it does here, I would be

perfectly understood when I say 'the revolution is continuous; it marches on, and as it marches on it clarifies itself. It learns what it is and what it must do'. And again: 'it has in itself its own morality; by cutting themselves off from it the Communists have deprived themselves of the morality *in which they themselves believe*. They are self-excommunicated: which makes them mentally miserable and dangerous, finding no relief except in incessant action, and in wild abuse of those whose existence reminds them of their loss.' It is a natural reaction from this which has made the news editors of the *Daily Worker* of both New York and London choose the Roman Catholic Church as a refuge.

As a system of morality, it gives a negative as well as a positive guide; and the things it rejects are generally precisely those which disquiet us most in the recent (and for that matter in the older history) of revolt. The prohibition of unusual punishments, or punishments without fair trial is one of the oldest and best established of our principles. The actions of Fouquier Tinville in the French Revolution, the archives of the Lubianka Prison, or the tormenting of such revolutionaries as Victor Serge—it becomes clear at once that we have to view with great suspicion specious arguments in favour of such things. Only a quite impractical man would deny that great danger to the community would excuse suspension of liberties, violence and even cruelty. A State, like an honest man, may sometimes be forced by circumstances to yield to a sort of blackmail; it may be forced to do things which it strongly dislikes. But if he is courageous and sensible the man breaks away the very first moment that he can. So should the State do. What is disturbing about such events is not that they occurred in times of great danger, but that they continued; and that neither in France and Russia was there the machinery or the popular demand that made it impossible for them to last one day longer than they were absolutely imperative. There is no work more essentially part of the revolutionary spirit than the construction of legal safeguards that make such extraordinary powers of strictly limited life, and highly difficult to revive.

For the same reason we must condemn the enforced 'confessions' that have been such a disagreeable feature of Russian internal politics and have even been transplanted to the British Communist Party in one well-known case. Indeed, there can be fewer clearer examples of the difference between the two

principles. The adherent of Dialectical Materialism considers that some immediate advantage to the cause of his Party or of Russia may result from the confession. It must therefore, he says, be made; and if there is reluctance to make it, it must be forced. The revolutionary answer is that the confession is probably false, and certainly an offence to human dignity. But this is an argument ruled out by the 'Dialectic', replies the other. The Rights of Man are superseded at the best, for they are part of the bourgeois revolution, and the present revolution is bound to be its Negation. Thus, talk of human dignity is reactionary nonsense.

Another practice that is condemned by this standard is one that has done deeper wounds in the last twenty years than any others. Outside observers wonder, sometimes, why such bitter opposition is felt in the established Socialist parties of the West towards the Communist Parties. On occasion it seems to them to be pathological, to pass all common sense. Certainly, they say, the Communists may need to have what they did and said between 1939 and 1941 forgotten and forgiven. But has no one else made a mistake? Was the Social Democratic and Labour Party record over a long period so impeccable? Decades of feebleness may be as bad as one monster mistake. To some extent the anger is pathological; or was so during and before the war. The Socialists themselves felt that their indignation was sentimental, or anyway could only be expressed in moral terms. They felt shaky about their grounds, and as men do who feel shaky about their anger, they expressed it the more hysterically. If they were aware of the revolutionary justification for their objections they might be surer and also more balanced in them. For the real cause dates from one event—the adoption of the policy of 'bolshevization' by the Third International and its parties under Zinoviev's direction in 1923. One of the most important instructions included in the policy was that on nucleus work. It became the duty of Communists to form 'nuclei' in all other Labour organizations, whose members would co-ordinate their activities with the intention of gaining control. They would concert the terms of resolutions privately beforehand, pick out approved candidates for committees, and divert inopportune proposals; all without openly taking control or changing the title of the organization. One further, quite logical step, was to set up organizations, with attractive non-party titles, which would be under their control

from the beginning. All this led, of course, to a good deal of dissimulation and trickery, and on occasion to downright hard lying. I have some curious relics of those days in my records. But it was all for the Revolution, wasn't it? So the revolutionaries comforted themselves; Trotsky, who saw further into the question than most of his colleagues, offered the consoling formula: 'One may lie to and trick the enemies of the workers; one must never lie to or trick the workers themselves.' But this did not really work; the 'corrupt leaders' were perhaps the 'enemies of the workers' but the persons who in actual fact were being tricked or lied to were quite ordinary members of working class organizations. From those days has survived the suspicion that any Left organization may be fraudulent and that any apparently (say) anti-Fascist resolution may conceal a trick. The fear of Petticoat Lane methods has led people to take the precautions usually observed in that street, of which the easiest is to refuse to trade at all.

The contrast between revolutionary morality and Dialectical Materialism can most easily be seen, I suppose, in questions of foreign policy. If there was room, I could work out the comparison between Lenin's foreign policy and Stalin's. Lenin, in Persia and China and in countries which had belonged to Tsarist Russia, followed the principle—so simple as to seem almost naïve—that all that the Soviet Foreign Office needed to do was to ascertain and serve the needs and wishes of the workers in these countries. Its deeds, and an explanation of them in plain language, would be all the diplomatic propaganda that was needed. This policy brought some dividends (including the Council of Action which in 1920 prevented a British war on Russia). Stalin's is marked by the three hinge-points of the Stalin-Laval pact, the Nazi-Soviet pact, and the Anglo-Russian treaty. These are commonly said to be irreconcilable, and to require fantastic contortions and self-contradictions among those who support them. Nothing of the sort: they are entirely consequential and even predictable once it is realized that the ruling principle is that the interests of the Russian State are supreme and traditional revolutionary morality does not exist.

These are negative instances: they are examples of what we condemn. But what do we approve? It is impossible to answer that question in detail: I would need five hundred pages and two hundred thousand words, and at that would probably do it

adequately. For the answer must be both an interpretation of recorded human life—past and present—and a rule of conduct for the individual. I would need to re-interpret not only the great historical documents I have quoted already, but also such things as the philosophy expounded in T. H. Huxley's letters and essays. There is only one general, descriptive statement I can make.

Socialist morality—the ethics of habit and living which I have been advocating—agrees with Marxism on one profoundly important point. That is, that Socialism is or should be a different form of society from Capitalism, and that therefore Socialists, who today are the only serious revolutionaries, must be people who are in their minds, morals and habits already members of a new society. This, in its most usual misinterpretation, is generally held to mean that they should behave as if the Utopia they hope for had already arrived; and has thereby encouraged the luxuriant growth of oddities which has adorned the sides of the Socialist movement since its beginning—especially in Britain and America. 'Advanced' literature dealing with sex, vegetarianism, vivisection, nudism or education has sometimes contained material whose only excuse for existence was that it discouraged us from the sin of spiritual pride, by reminding us that it was possible for a self-styled Socialist to be as great a fool as anyone outside the movement. The bearded and voluble gentleman in sandals from a garden city, with his female free-companion in homespun clothes, will so educate his unfortunate child, in a school based on theoretically admirable principles, that it is unfitted to face the outside capitalist world at all, and can see no difference in kind between a Helsinki camp leader and a man who is not interested in the wrongs of performing animals; but he is a mockery of us, a Court Fool to keep us sane. The society of which we are members is not one that is here, but one that is coming, and which we are helping to come. It is a perfectly legitimate metaphor to say that the new society is in the womb of the old. We act, not as if it were here, but in such a way as to bring it to birth.

By saying that Socialists are 'in their minds, morals and habits already members of a new society' I meant, therefore, that they acted and thought in such a way that they would do nothing to hinder and everything to defeat the opponents of the birth of that new society. And here even the bearded gentleman has his momentary justification. In one sense, and only in one sense, that

society does exist, or at least has existed in the memory of living man. It existed in a community of feeling and loyalty, passing by frontiers—it had no economic existence, but it had an intellectual and emotional existence. Before the war of 1914 tore it into pieces which never wholly reunited, the international Socialist movement was a real thing. It might possibly have had, and some people thought it would have, a stronger pull on its members' loyalty than nationalism even in the event of war. One of those who did was the ablest of all pre-war interpreters of international affairs—H. N. Brailsford in *The War of Steel and Gold* (1914). Its leaders met regularly together, not to advance their own countries' needs, but to compare programmes and harmonize them, in the interests of the workers of all the world. They submitted to international decision problems which were both domestic and of considerable financial importance to individuals—such as whether a Socialist party should allow members to join in Coalition cabinets. The French party referred precisely this question to it and abided by the decision, to the monetary loss of some eminent members. The bounds of the movement were wider than the orthodox Socialist parties: trade unionists and even anarchists were generally considered, and often considered themselves, as equally part of it, and rebuked backslidings with the embittered frankness common in family quarrels.

Some of us can remember this slowly forming world—those who were Socialists before 1914 or who remember the frantic efforts of 1917 (at the time of the abortive Stockholm conference) to save it. (Or, more exactly, its own efforts to save itself and the world in that crucial year.) They will also have felt how disastrous has been its absence since then. Any example will do: the one which comes to my mind first is the 'Trotsky' trials and the purges which horrified the Western world before the war and started the rapid degeneration of Russian and Communist morality. What would we not have given then for an international authority however shadowy and purely 'moral', to which both sides could have, without loss of principle, referred questions of fact? If there had been a Bureau like the International Socialist Bureau to which Keir Hardie, Vaillant, Bebel and Plekhanoff all belonged could the conflict ever have become as vicious as it did?

But this is nostalgia. Nothing returns in time; history never repeats itself; the International is dead. It may be for us, however

to bring back into objective life what is already alive in our hearts and in those of very many people all over Europe. And it is now certain that we cannot for the present do that by trying to re-create the International as the founders of the First and Second Internationals understood it—as an organization of all workers; there is no possibility of any organization which contains both Communists and Socialists having any vitality. The last one which appears to, the World Federation of Trade Unions, is splitting as these words are written. In all other organizations which appear to be 'mixed', the truth is merely that the process of the consumption of Socialists by Communists is not yet complete. The meal takes three stages. In Czechoslovakia, for example, the Socialists are still treated with respect, their suggestions are received with the effusive and slightly toothy praise of a governess for an obedient but backward child, and Mr. Crossman is shown round Prague with every deference. In Bulgaria Socialists may still exist, but those who were rash enough to vote against the Budget were asked by Dimitrov if they wanted to join Petkov, who was judicially murdered because he had friendly relations with a foreign Socialist government (Britain). In Rumania there are no Socialists.

These are only three stages along the same road. There appear to be no by-roads off it, once three conditions are fulfilled: (1) that the Socialists and Communists have 'united'; (2) that the Red Army is a fairly near neighbour; (3) that the Communists or their nominees have been in control of the Ministries of War and the Interior for at least six months. The last is perhaps the most important condition; it is a direct deduction from Marx's and Engels's analysis of 1848 and 1849. The revolutionary governments of those years, they pointed out, frequently lost power because they left the army and the police under reactionary leaders. The Communist action in grabbing those ministries was no surprise to anybody with a knowledge of revolutionary history and theory; there seems however to have been no such person, with the exception of Jules Moch, in any Western government.

Any organization which is to attempt to embody once again the revolutionary tradition and drive must bear this point in mind. It will have to balance the need to encourage those who are still struggling for life behind the Iron Curtain against the fear of admitting mere agents and fellow travellers to its ranks. It will have, quite as much, to beware of becoming merely a European

organization with some platonic supporters in the United States (as all previous Internationals have been). It must have as integral members the workers in the British Commonwealth, the French empire, South-East Asia, and so on. It must be as conscious of a riot in Accra as of kidnappings in Vienna.

On May Day 1948, is the time opportune for a political organization or for an economic organization, or for a cultural, philosophic or educational organization, or for any organization at all? I am very well aware I have not discussed this. I cannot now. I have not the space; and I am not, to tell the truth, absolutely certain of the answer.

EVELYN WAUGH

MGR RONALD KNOX

MANY American universities take an annual vote to elect the student 'most likely to succeed'. Had this been the practice at Oxford in 1910, the choice would almost certainly have fallen on Ronald Knox, of Balliol. That age is now legendary. It is effortless to say as I have often heard said, that, had they grown to maturity, that heroic group loosely dubbed 'the Grenfells' would have developed the weaknesses of every other generation. All we know is that they died young leaving a unique reputation for brilliance, high-spirits, and grace, and that a rich, determining tradition in English life seems to have withered and died with them. Ronald Knox as an undergraduate was an animating spirit of the innermost circle of this group. He was the most scholarly of them, the most nimble-witted and the most other-worldly. He came up from Eton with the lustre of a book already published and praised, verses in English, Latin and Greek of remarkable polish and ingenuity. All the coveted university distinctions—the Hertford, the Ireland, Presidency of the Union, a first in Greats—came to him as mere by-products of an intense and varied intellectual and social life. He took Holy Orders in the Church of England, was elected fellow of Trinity and made his rooms there the centre of the choicest spirits of the succeeding years.

He wrote brilliantly and copiously. The career predicted for him was, at the least ambitious, that of a great ecclesiastical wit, Max Beerbohm in lawn sleeves; or, equally possible, that of an historic English churchman, a Cranmer or a Laud, who would gather up and redirect the faltering community, leaving his mark on the examination papers of the future—"Archbishop Knox succeeded because he attempted too much"—Discuss this statement.'

There are numbers of men who enjoyed huge reputations as undergraduates, of whom we say: 'I wonder what happened to old So-and-So?' Everyone knows what happened to Ronald Knox. He became a Catholic priest. His office diverted him from the general stream of intellectual life of his country and with the years the separation has widened until, it may be, there are many readers who, ironically, think of him as a parodist and the writer of detective stories, and as nothing more.

The intention of this essay is secular, to introduce to the modern non-Catholic literary public the achievements of one of the most considerable living writers. It would not be seemly to treat here of his life as a priest, but some understanding of what that office means to him and to his fellow Catholics is essential to an understanding of his work. He is not, as many admirable Englishmen have been, a clergyman who finds recreation from his parochial duties in belles-lettres. As a matter of fact he has never been a parish-priest. Nor is he, like the many modern writers who support political or social causes, merely concerned to use his technical skill to insinuate extraneous dogmas. A Catholic priest is not a man who holds a certain set of opinions more strongly than his fellows; he regards himself, and is regarded by lay Catholics, as a man consecrated and set apart; not cleverer, or more learned or even more virtuous, but different, indelibly marked. His essential work is not in the study or the pulpit, but at the altar. He offers a daily sacrifice and everything else he does is an extension of this office. Mgr Knox has done what seems purely secular work but always, like the farm labour of a monk, part of his priestly calling. (His detective stories were written to support the expenses of the Oxford University chaplaincy. The brilliant exercises in humorous scholarship by which he is most widely known—the *Studies in Sherlock Holmes* and so forth—were papers designed to enliven the stodgy fare of pious societies.)

There are those who, lacking other objects of reverence, now attribute a priest's, even a martyr's, sanctity to the artist. It is to them primarily that I wish to offer the spectacle of a man born with every aptitude and sensibility that make for literary eminence, who has without betrayal of that vocation subordinate it to, and harmonized it with, a higher.

Mgr Knox has written and published a great deal but I shall mention only the books which are most likely to interest the non-Christian reader. His work falls into certain easily recognizable categories.

First there is the controversial writing with which he originally became prominent. Some of the best was done before his conversion. He writes in *A Spiritual Acreid* that he would have accepted the Roman obedience earlier if it had not been so obvious. The logical acrobatics of High Church apology were a delight to the mind which could demonstrate so felicitously that Queen Victoria wrote *In Memoriam*. *Absolute and Absolute*, *Some Loose Stones*, *Reunion all Round* are models of literary skill. But in 1912 came the realization that the verbal card-castles so delicately built in the Trinity common-room did not provide spiritual defence in the battle-fields where his friends were falling daily.

As a Catholic he has never sought adversaries. Editors and publishers have approached him from time to time with sheaves of press-cuttings and the demand: 'This needs answering.' Then dutifully but without, I think, much relish, he has turned his old skill to the defence of his new, ancient faith. It is not, I am sure simply because I am in agreement that I find him a master of controversy. (We are often embarrassed by the methods of doughty champions of our own side.) *Caliban in Grub Street* 1930, was an examination of the slump-provoked interest in religion which was suddenly and absurdly exhibited by the daily press. But the best-sellers who were then hired to expound their beliefs were too inept to attract more than broad ridicule. In *Broadcast Minds*, 1932, he engaged more worthy opponents. H. G. Wells, Prof. Julian Huxley, Lord Russell, Mencken, Mr. Gerald Heard, Mr. Langdon Davies, men who personify the sentiments of their time, whose influence can be discerned in countless odd corners today. At his hands these pundits became blundering, snorting animals, teased, baffled, pricked and finally left floundering in the sand. The most resolute modernist, if sh

also a girl of genuine literary taste, must delight in the grace and precision of this series of *estocadas*. A rare quality in Mgr Knox's polemic is the fullness with which he accepts the meaning and implication of his opponents' point. Some modern Catholic controversialists assume an arrogant confidence in their cause and are content to turn aside a serious argument with a jolly verbal 'score'; Mgr Knox never. For all his wit he always engages the heart of the issue. Indeed he often summarizes his opponents' case far more lucidly and plausibly than they have done themselves. Once, in a correspondence published under the title of *Difficulties*, he had the rare experience of convincing his adversary, Mr. Arnold Lunn. But in general these exhibitions of wit will serve more to divert the faithful than convert the infidel. The meat is dragged out of the bull-ring but the *vacadas* still team with wit. The old fallacies turn up again and again. It is not the priest's role to compete for applause. So, I think, in recent years Mgr Knox has wearied of these victories. No doubt if a great occasion arises in his lifetime we shall again see him toss his hat behind him. Meanwhile he tends to leave invitations from the bull-ring unanswered. He knows he is clever and he knows he is right and he has other things to do than demonstrate these facts weekly.

But there is one recent book that must be mentioned in connection with these works of controversy; *God and the Atom*, 1945. This swiftly written essay of less than 150 pages attracted little attention in the hubbub in which it appeared. It is in many ways a postscript to, and epitome of, all his controversial work. Twelve years before he had been in conflict with the jaunty materialistic optimism of Wells and Lord Russell. The destruction of Hiroshima provided a dramatic conclusion to the discussion. And one of the greatneses of this little book is that Mgr Knox is never content to say: 'I told you so.' He addresses equally the Christian tempted to *Schadenfreude* and the heathen tempted to despair.

To the practical warrior the atom-bomb presented no particular moral or spiritual problem. We were engaged in destroying an enemy, civilians and combatants alike. We always assumed that destruction was roughly proportionate to the labour and material expended. Whether it was more convenient to destroy a city with one bomb or a hundred thousand depended on the

relative costs of production. That is how the strategists saw it. But a sure popular instinct has made that bomb a symbol (a daily paper even adopted a new chronology and for a time dated its issues by 'Days of the Atomic Age'). The preliminary of Mr. Knox's examination is to show that the popular inquiet was based on the deepest philosophic grounds. The incident made a wound in the civilized mind and, significantly, Mr. Knox divides his essay into psychiatric sections—Trauma, Analysis, Adjustment and Sublimation.

There had been committed a triple outrage on Faith, Hope and Charity; on Faith in that the actual mechanics of the device, the discovery of 'an indeterminate element in the heart of things' (which atom will split?) seemed at first flush to cast doubt on the hypothesis of causality and the five classical Thomist proofs of the existence of God; on Hope, which I suspect has suffered the most widespread injury, in 'the prospect of an age in which the possibilities of evil are increased by an increase in the possibilities of destruction'; on Charity by 'the news that men fighting for good cause have taken, at one particular moment of decision, the easier, not the nobler path'. He has gone, you see, right to the heart of the problem as he always did, though this time his adversary seemed to be, not a popular journalist, but the constitution of the Universe and the stream of History. And—or so it seems to me—just as he made rings round poor Mr. Gerald Heard, he now makes rings round the Universe and History.

As one grows older one receives more frequent communications from strangers demanding peremptorily: 'Kindly state on the back of enclosed postcard the names of the books which have inspired you', and as one grows older it becomes harder to name one. *God and the Atom* inspired me; it came at a time of deflation and blew into me a clear breath of reason and wisdom. I believe it is a great book but the reader may well ask: 'Why have I not heard of it before? It was topical. The present day is all too apt for popularization. No doubt it had some particular, personal appeal to you. If it had been meant for me I should have found it in my hands before now.'

It is a valid point.

One reason, no doubt, is that there still survives from pre-emancipation days a definite, though barely conscious, discrimination on the part of librarians, literary-editors and others against

specifically Catholic books which does not extend to those which are specifically agnostic or atheist. For example, if I want a copy of any of Mgr Knox's works I have to go to a shop which specializes in rosaries and missals. It simply would not occur to the kindly corporal who keeps the shop where I habitually deal that a book by a Monsignor called *God and the Atom* could be 'General Literature'.

But this is not the whole reason. There are certain limitations on the author himself which may always hamper his direct influence on his contemporaries.

First, in an age trained from infancy in inductive habits of thought, Mgr Knox has an instinctively deductive mind. Start him from scratch, as Mr. Lunn did, and he will build you a very solid structure of philosophy. But in general he does not start every inquiry anew at scratch. He makes very large pre-suppositions and, confronted with an apparent anomaly, his method is not to question his principles but to examine the phenomenon to see how it can be reconciled with them. It is in no way a weakness that it weakens his appeal when he comes to address those with contrary principles or with no principles at all.

The second and graver limitation is one of language. Mgr Knox writes in an easy, conversational style but it is the conversation of pre-1914 Oxford when it was bad form to be pompous, overbearing or abstruse, but when a great deal of common ground was taken for granted. Many Englishmen learned this language in their homes and speak it naturally—indeed without being aware that there is any other means of human intercourse—it is not at all natural to those educated, say, at the London School of Economics or at most American colleges. It presupposes, at the lowest, the sort of knowledge which enables one to solve the *Times* cross-word puzzle—a hotchpotch of half-forgotten history and poetry and legend, chosen it may seem without much method but presenting a vague map of the world in which the Mediterranean is the centre. This was the equipment of the 'educated' man, a generation ago. Some had learned much more than others, but it was generally assumed that everyone had tried to learn the same sort of thing, and it is on this common fund of knowledge that Mgr Knox invariably draws when he seeks an illustration to his argument. Take, for example, this fine passage from *God and the Atom*, a book explicitly designed for

'the plain man'; 'At the moment of victory a sign appeared in heaven; not the comforting Labarum of the Milvian Bridge, but the bright, evil cloud which hung over Hiroshima. In this sign we were to conquer'. How many members of the House of Commons today, how many editors or Air-Marshals, know what the Labarum was? How many despondent American housewives? There may or may not be an intrinsic value in the content of traditional European education, but I do not see how literary culture can survive at all without *some* corpus of common texts. One must be able to appeal to the known in order to explain the unknown. A traveller from Africa may describe a zebra as being like a striped pony and be understood in most parts of the world. Not, however, by an Eskimo, and to describe the zebra in terms of the walrus would be a delicate task. 'Human Letters' once served the purpose of providing common ground. They do so no longer, and it has become difficult for men of opposed views to discuss their differences intelligibly.

There is, I think, little resentment today of superior information. People like to be told things. But Mgr Knox is the least didactic of savants. It is when he is trying to popularize, to make plain in untechnical terms a metaphysical question, that he draws on his superior knowledge, courteously assuming that we all remember our Virgil and Matthew Arnold. In doing so he reveals the existence of a society quite other than what he seeks to persuade and the revelation, combined with his frequent, entirely unself-conscious references to nannies and gardeners and cross-channel steamers and country-house visiting, and with his implicit assumption that a decent sufficiency of worldly goods is the normal lot of man, does, I think, carry a perceptible flavour of the class distinctions which are unmentionable today.

It was fashionable in the late thirties—and, for all I know, it is still fashionable—to assert that an artist must be 'contemporary'. Reflection shows that this obligation is quite illusory. Some very great artists have had this quality, many have not. The more learned and philosophic the man, the less likely he is to be 'contemporary', for he will know that most 'new' ideas are restatements of very old ones and that the latest events are in essentials repetitions of what has happened before. Moreover, the nervous condition which induces a man to sit up late twiddling his wireless-set in order to hear the news before the morning paper

es not, I think, conduce to high technical achievement in the
ts. But wise and great men—Thomas More for instance—
ve been ‘contemporary’ and Mgr Knox definitely is not.

I do not mean that he lives in a monkish and scholarly seclusion
note from the affairs of his neighbours. He knows what is
ing on about him—few better. But he lacks that zest for his
rn period which makes some men declare that however bloody
d destructive the age, it is theirs and they would not have been
rn in any other. Perhaps Mgr Knox experienced that exhilara-
n in youth. He does not seek to recapture it now. The world for
n is a place of exile and probation; it is impious to complain
out it; it is fatuous to join Mr. J. B. Priestley in representing it
entirely jolly. Most readers want to be assured that they live in
ring times, even if they are only stirred to horror. Mgr Knox
uses to play that game.

He has not often been happy in his choice of titles. I suspect
t he allows editors and publishers—notoriously ineffectual
des—to choose them for him. ‘*Let Dons Delight*’ is deplorably
ned. It suggests an academic squib, whereas the theme is a
ve one, the cumulative, disastrous estrangement between
rning and Divinity as exemplified in nine conversations held
the same Oxford common-room at intervals of fifty years
ween 1588 and 1938. In *Absolute and Abitofhell* Mgr Knox had
eady shown a rare genius for pastiche and parody. In *Let Dons
ight* it is hard to distinguish where one ends and the other
ts. He is ruthless with Mark Pattison (a man little read). In
rest of the writing—the Notes at the end of each chapter have
ch of the cream of it—the exaggerations are so delicate as to
barely perceptible. The distinctive flavour of each generation
recisely caught. One is there in the panelled room with them,
ring the dons talk.

Each conversation has the same pattern; the ageing provost, the
a-head don, the guest, the subdued echo of the great events of
outside world, the misplaced confidence. The danger of such
method was, of course, monotony. Nine similar conversations
st prove a strain on the invention; a strain which Mgr Knox
ports with dazzling ingenuity. Each little scene is delicious in
lf; the minor characters are all ‘characters’—for example, in
8, the awful young man who is being vetted for a fellowship.
the major theme an indication is given in the sub-titles—

'Hannibal ad Portas: 1588', 'Cakes and Ale: 1638', 'The Pigeons Flutter: 1688', 'Lost Causes: 1738', 'The Unchanging World: 1788', 'False Dawn: 1838', 'A Rear-guard Action: 1888', 'Chaos: 1938'. The book contains the whole of the conver criticism of the Church of England, that it was an improvisat which fortuitously assumed an aspect of permanence and the speedily came to nothing. It contains the philosopher's criticism of recent philosophic history—the factitious divorce of Reason from Revelation leading to the denial of both. It also contains the artist's most moving lament for the desolation of a loved city.

I believe that when Mgr Knox wrote *Let Dons Delight*, he did not know that he was leaving Oxford. If so, the work is strangely prophetic for there runs through it the thread of the dispossessed shepherd of the First Eclogue—*sitientes ibimus Afros*—the Elizabethan following the old faith to Douai and Tyburn, the scholar gypsy, the Tractarian preceding Newman into exile. And in fact *Let Dons Delight* proved to be Mgr Knox's own farewell to Oxford. In 1939 he was called from his thirteen-year fruitful chaplaincy in the Old Palace in St. Aldates to undertake his weightiest work, the translation of the Vulgate.

For a hundred years the loss of the majestic prose of the Jacobean Authorized Version has been a sentimental regret. The Roman converts from the Church of England. The Douai version roughly revised from time to time, carries a strong flavour of St. Jerome's Latin but it is, as English, uncouth and abounds in such passages as: 'For the priesthood being translated, it is necessary that a translation also be made of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken is of another tribe, of which no one attended on the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; in which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. And it is yet far more evident: if according to the similitude Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not according to the law of a carnal commandment, but according to the power of an indissoluble life.'

Since Newman's day the Catholic bishops have had it in mind to order a new translation. Newman was let slip. In Mgr Knox they realized, they had been given a second chance. Here, among their clergy, was a scholar versed in all the ramifications of German Higher Criticism who was also an outstanding English stylist. Therefore ten years, at the height of his powers, were sequestered

om Mgr Knox's life for this huge task. Some may feel that this was a high price, but Mgr Knox is a man under authority.

One must be precise about the terms of his duty. He had not to produce a new English Bible but a new translation of the Vulgate, the Latin version of the canonical scriptures compiled by St. Jerome in the fourth century, and of the particular edition of that book issued in 1592 by Pope Clement VIII which has since been the official text of the Catholic Church. He was thus relieved of many of an editor's responsibilities in judging between various plausible readings; indeed, at first glance the work might appear to be one of mere drudgery for a Latinist of Mgr Knox's capacity.

One pictures a drowsy archiepiscopal schoolmaster and Knox quartus on to construe; 'Please sir, I couldn't find *seminiverbius*.' 'Well, what is it derived from?' '*Semen* and *verbum*, sir?' 'Of course. I should render it "a sower of words".' 'But, please sir, that doesn't sound very good English, sir. I mean it doesn't seem to make sense. And if he meant that, why didn't he say *sator verborum*, sir?' 'Knox, do you not realize this is an Inspired Text? Get on, and don't ask irreverent questions.' A blue-bottle sails at the class-room window.

But in fact the task set two problems of extreme delicacy. Every translator knows that it is very rare indeed to find in any two languages a pair of words which are invariably interchangeable. The Douai translators had merely set down what Jerome's Latin meant then to Englishmen in the sixteenth century. Mgr Knox's first problem was to enter the mind of a fourth-century Dalmatian ascetic and find what the original Greek and Hebrew texts had meant to *him*. The second problem was to put this meaning into the language of the twentieth century.

He was dealing, moreover, with a venerable book. I think that most Englishmen asked to explain the meaning of 'venerable', they were not given time to think about its derivation, would suggest 'antiquity' as an essential connotation. To Mgr Knox the Scriptures are venerable, not because they are ancient, but on the contrary because they are of immediate topical importance. Custom ordains that at the altar he should wear the semblance of a sixth-century overcoat, but when he puts it off to read the gospel and epistle in the common tongue he is charged with an entirely modern message. Add to this the further consideration that for practical purposes it is undesirable to have a

fresh translation every decade; that he was required to produce a version which would be perfectly lucid throughout the English speaking world for two or three hundred years; and the magnitude of the task appears.

He has accomplished it, alone, in ten years. It is the loneliness of the task which is especially impressive. A journalist on *Lit* magazine has a whole team of 'researchers' running round for him when he sits down to produce an article. Mgr Knox settled down in Shropshire with a few dozen books of reference and day by day toiled at his typewriter, without any very lively encouragement from his friends or any very breathless expectancy from his superiors. As a result, the book has a unity and individuality which no other translation can claim.

It is unlikely that those who resort to the Bible for purely aesthetic pleasure will prefer Mgr Knox's translation. It was an ascetic exercise worthy of Jerome himself. No one could have done a more elegant pastiche; that was not his purpose. He has been grimly functional and has not scrupled to employ the drier periphrases in order to extract the fullest, most precise meaning from his original. The Epistles, in particular, which are often barely intelligible in either the Douai or the Authorized Version, here become modern and cogent. They are disquieting to those who from long familiarity have learned to enjoy the rhythm and august phrases without considering what they meant. The less the reader is concerned with the sense, the more he will resent their new form. But when one writes of 'familiarity' with the 'rhythm' of the Authorized Version, one is today betraying oneself as middle-aged. It is unquestioned that for the past three hundred years the Authorized Version has been the greatest single formative influence in English prose style. But that time is over. These 'rhythms and august phrases' were drummed into us and our ancestors, not for their beauty, but because they were universally accepted as the Word of God. They were read aloud daily at school, at the University, and in many homes. People sat up in cottages conning them by candle light; they taught themselves to read with no other purpose. When the Bible ceases, as it is ceasing, to be accepted as a sacred text it will not long survive for its fine writing. It will take place beside the *Anatomy of Melancholy* and *Urn Burial* as a book to be read by very few at very rare occasions. It seems to me probable that in a hundred years

ne the only Englishmen who know their bibles will be Catholic. and they will know it in Mgr Knox's version. *Sitientes ibimus* *Wros*. The incised rock of this desert exile may well be his most lasting monument.

Lastly (for I do not mean to write here of the detective stories) there are the sermons, a category likely to provoke alarm even among church-goers. It is notorious that this is a new and un-English prejudice. Dr. Johnson could weigh all the prominent teachers of his day. '... South is one of the best if you except his peculiarities and his violence and sometimes coarseness of language. He has a very fine style ... Sherlock's style, too, is very elegant though he has not made it his principal study—and you may add Maltrudge ... I should like to read all that Ogden has written ...' and so on through all the catalogue of sonorous, forgotten names, until in the pause rendered doubly famous by Sir Max Beerbohm, the small, doomed voice, piped up: 'Were not Dodd's sermons addressed to the passions?'

Mgr Knox's sermons are very definitely not addressed to the passions. There are several books of them and a great number still unpublished. Heard or read they are quiet in tone without rhetorical effects, emotional appeal or trenchant argument. They are addressed primarily to the imagination. The reader who wishes to sample their peculiar flavour might well dip into *The Mystery of the Kingdom*, 1937, though there is no representative in that collection of a *genre* in which Mgr Knox stands in his age alone—the formal panegyric.

On certain great occasions—the centenary, for example, of Newman's conversion—Mgr Knox is often invited to preach before a select audience and in these set-pieces he allows himself some ornament and elaboration. Most of them have to be sought in the back-numbers of the *Tablet* and I hope that one day we shall see them collected in a fine quarto volume. The sermons which have so far appeared in book-form are mostly in series—conferences to undergraduates, courses for retreats. They are very rare and symmetrical in form, consisting for the most part of the examination of some familiar text or parable, the unfolding of it to reveal deeper meaning, and the application of it to a problem in the spiritual life. Were there not abundant evidence that they appeal to a great diversity of hearers I should say that they were specifically literary, for in each of them there is that sudden

flash and fusion of ideas and observed fact which correspond exactly to the process known as literary 'creation'.

Mgr Knox is now in his sixtieth year. His long labour on the Vulgate is drawing to a close. He has already achieved a body of work which will ensure his lasting renown among specialists. Will his place in English Literature be Challoner's or a Newman's?

It depends I think purely on outside circumstances. He is at the height of his powers but it is not in his priestly vocation to pursue personal fame. Newman, whose career has so many similarities with Mgr Knox's, remained almost forgotten to the world until at the age of sixty-four, he suddenly stepped into glory with the work of a few weeks—the *Apologia*. Should the propitious moment come, we may well see Mgr Knox emerge from his seclusion in the Mendips and quietly take his place among the most illustrious, beside Pascal and Bossuet; but neither he nor his friends search for a portent in the skies with anxious anxiety. That is in other hands.

LLOYD FRANKENBERG

CONSCIENCE FREE

FOR its biggest show, the halls of the Grand Central Palace have been aisled like cattleruns. In the middle aisle an interne in a white suit watched us go by. Whenever a shorter than usual nude came along, the interne fixed him with his eye, looked him up and down, and in a voice of doom bawled out: 'Submarines!' A feeble grin travelled from mouth to mouth. The line faltered.

The papers clutched in all hands were stamped 'I-A'. No exception had been noted by the sergeant guarding the entrance.

'Look at this,' he said to the corporal detailed to stand beside him. 'A Four-E. Better pass the word along inside.'

'They can't miss it,' said the corporal.

Face-printing me sternly, they motioned me on. A battery of typewriters clicked out our statistics. In the disrobing room we were given tags for our clothes. 'We're numbers now,' said someone. A continuously forming line, like an assembly being jerked ahead, inching through partitions and around corridors.

alliver-sized Lilliputians swarmed over us, measuring, thumping, whispering digits, putting lights up our noses and planks down our tongues, causing our hearts to scribble and our lungs shine.

At the weighing machine, the sergeant recorded my poundage. 'Four-E,' he said. 'What's that?'

'That means I'm a conscientious objector.'

'Yeah? New one on me.' He looked at me with mild curiosity.

'You studying to be a missionary?'

'No.'

'No?' His eyes reached the limits of speculation. 'Just don't want to be in it, huh?'

'That's right.'

He inspected the idea as one might a new can-opener, then resumed measuring. I went on. The psychiatrist noted suspiciously that I was a writer. The finger-print expert declined to waste ink on me. The guard of the next junction sent me back. The expert was firm. The guard was equally firm. I was turning into a military stalemate. Finally the authorities met and agreed that the sure index of my identity be withheld. Even the army considered itself a criminal offence.

Reclothed, we awaited our verdicts. It was an occasion when the majority of mankind hoped something was wrong with it; not enough.

I didn't get 'REJECTED'. I wasn't inducted either. They didn't seem to know what to do with me. A captain signing things told me to go home. A corporal guarding the exit wouldn't let me through. Neither would leave his post. I was in another bottleneck until the captain issued a safe-conduct to a specially designated side-door.

I must have been the only C.O. going through that day. In all there were about 12,000 classified IV-E by the draft boards. Several thousand more went to jail. These included 'absolutists' who refused to register, objectors denied classification, and the men who walked out of camp. An undisclosed number, over 100,000 according to church estimates, accepted I-A-O classification for non-combatant service with the army.

'This is the thing for you,' said one of my draft board members. 'You get pay, dependency allotment, chance of promotion and all that, yet you're guaranteed not to bear arms. If you hold out

for Four-E you'll just wind up in one of those camps with a lot of religious nuts.'

My board had been very fair and scrupulously courteous. The only question they raised concerned an ambiguity in the law. The draft form had required those claiming objector status to swear that they were 'conscientiously opposed, by reason of religious training and belief' to participation in war. A directive was subsequently issued, advising boards to interpret 'religious' broadly. The double-talk must have reflected uneasy compromises behind the scenes. Certainly it invited double dealing. Many boards continued to deny status to men without church affiliation. Others vindictively sent men to camp who would never have been accepted for the army.

My only membership is with the non-sectarian War Resisters League. I felt that my objection was religious in that it was based on deep conviction. A lack of theology I didn't think deprived me of a conscience. One reason for my distrust of churches was their all but universal sanction of wars.

My conviction was, and is, that war is self-defeating. To wage it successfully, the methods and premises that are being opposed must be accepted and exceeded. The atomic bomb, which confirmed certain speculations in physics, also confirmed this principle. No issue is settled, but new ones are created, the conditions for future and more violent wars. Even its hatred misses the mark, wasting itself on the innocent, the helpless, and those on both sides who have let themselves be led into it. As E. E. Cummings has defined it, 'War is the science of inefficiency'.

I had been convinced of its futility by the poems of Wilfred Owen. Since I had written and published anti-war poems, the board was persuaded of my pacifism. On 11 August 1943 I boarded a train for camp.

The camp I was headed for was run by the Friends, who accepted members of other faiths and the unaffiliated. The Mennonites, the largest single group, took few outsiders. The Brethren came somewhere between, both in numbers and policy. These three 'historic peace churches' had made an arrangement with the Government in the first days of the draft. To avoid the persecutions of the previous war, they contracted to take over and maintain, at their expense, camps formerly assigned to the Civilian Conservation Corps, a pre-war work programme for

unemployed young men. The new set-up was called Civilian Public Service, sometimes confused in the public mind with a gas-and-electric company.

Sixty-two C.P.S. base-camps were scattered over the country in out-of-the-way, usually backward, regions. Men who could afford it paid the churches \$35 a month board. The others were carried on charity, which included a \$2.50 monthly allowance. Some statistician figured we were penny-an-hour men. By law we were assigned to 'work of national importance', universally translated 'impotence'. Most of the work programmes were under the Department of Agriculture.

C.P.S. 52 was situated on the eastern shore of Maryland; the 'tinus belt of America' as I was to discover. It was near a shambling crossroad village, Powellsville, mostly a collection of filling stations and shed stores serving the impoverished local farmers. A truck met us at the station in Salisbury, a town noted as the dividing line for Jim Crow. From Salisbury on south, Negroes have to move to the rear of buses, or to special cars on trains.

Through a flat-farming region we drove the fourteen miles to camp. The fields were dotted with what I took for round white bones; it was the melon season. Maryland is full of chicken-houses, long low wooden sheds in which a double production of eggs is induced by all-night lighting. We came to a rather larger collection of these, which turned out to be camp. Here we were assigned to barracks, or 'dorms,' as some prophet had named them. Life in them resembled a rather deranged boarding school.

Mine was the rowdiest: Dorm. III or The Kremlin. It contained a benign Russian-Bear-like personage, with the build of a workers' mural, who hailed each Soviet victory so enthusiastically that he was known as Timoshenko. Somehow the party-line gifts had left him stranded. He continued to be an objector on somewhat confused ideological grounds, and salved his social conscience by trying to convert Fundamentalists to the C.I.O. There was also the author of a best-selling novel, who wore sex on a hair-shirt: his own and everybody else's. The First Century Gospel boys listened open-mouthed to his vivid pornography. It was his mission to interrogate new arrivals on the variety of their sexual proclivities, in terms so succinct that the more squeamish fled at once to other quarters.

These two, more or less, set the tone; rather less religious than I

had been led to expect. They were by no means typical; but neither was anyone else. It was a camp of about a hundred and fifty individuals, including a Treasury Department tax expert, magician, a former curator of President Roosevelt's Hyde Park Library, and assorted professors, Ph.D.s, college students, mechanics, chiropractors and farm-boys. One saw-mill worker who had never left home before, was convinced he'd crossed the ocean to reach camp; he'd come via the Chesapeake Bay ferry.

On my arrival in Dorm. III I was asked if I was 'progressive'. This was the chief stamping-ground of the Social Action group. Some Friends joined it, although generally the camp was thought of as divided between the 'politically conscious' and the 'religious wobblies'. The latter regarded the former with suspicion, as godless. The Social Actionists retorted that the religious only objected to war because they'd been brought up that way, not because they'd 'thought things out for themselves'.

Principally argued was our lack of pay. Wages for C.O.s had been limited by law to those of army privates. On paper this looked liberal. Selective Service nullified it by simply not asking Congress for appropriations. It was explained that this helped convince people we were sincere. Similarly the 'hundred-mile ruling' removed us from the rancour of fellow townspeople. But to a Congressional Committee, General Hershey stated that these policies of segregation, isolation, no pay and no dependence allotment annually 'salvaged' a proportion of C.O.s to the armed forces.

He neglected to add that they salvaged an equal number to jail. Men disgusted with the camp set-up 'walked out', writing the draft boards what they were doing, why, and where they could be found. Then they waited for the F.B.I. They faced sentences from six months to five years, with the possibility of re-arrest if they refused to go back to camp.

The Social Actionists argued that the peace churches had been duped into supporting deliberately punitive measures. By itself the Government would not have risked initiating such policies. It could now point to them as voluntarily arrived at by religious bodies in a spirit of self-sacrifice.

The issues were endlessly debated. It was selfish to press for peace in a world at war. It was selfish not to; by acquiescing we were helping to set precedents for slave labour. It might be 'spiritual

significant' to renounce an established wage voluntarily. As it was, a religious philosophy was being imposed on men who didn't share it and had had no voice in shaping it. A good deal of the camp's resentment was diverted to various church interferences, A.F.S.C., B.S.C., M.S.C., N.S.B.R.O.; that sea of alphabet soup in which the real issue was drowned. For these, except by a polite fiction, had no real control of the camps. All recruits had to be approved by Selective Service; many of them originated there.

The law stated that C.O.s were to be under civilian direction. Perhaps General Hershey, Colonel Kosch, and other officers who left S.S., periodically turned into civilians. The matter was seldom mentioned in the public press. S.S. discouraged publicity; it might prejudice people against us. Successfully resisted were attempts to transfer the camps to the Department of the Interior, which had funds available for wages and more appropriate work-programmes. Also scrapped was a relief and rehabilitation programme, which proposed to employ C.O.s in the stricken areas of Europe or Asia.

Our own project was more useful than most; to straighten and open the course of the Pocomoke, a little creek which in spring locked up in swamps and flooded the cornlands. This project had been a local political football for over a hundred years. Its special utility lay in the antiquated methods that stretched into years a job that could have been done properly in weeks.

On some projects men were reported digging dirt out of one pile and throwing it in another. After the war, strikes broke out at several camps, the strikers refusing to continue project work. Instead they wrapped bundles to be sent abroad. Their ringleaders were arrested and sentenced; some of the cases are still under appeal.

Life in a C.O. camp was like life everywhere, only more so. Under the pressure of enforced propinquity, opinions were being formed or changed that might have taken a lifetime anywhere else. It was like a growth of democracy in miniature; all the stages of history going on at once in this backwater of the world.

The one religious ceremony observed was a minute of silent grace before meals. The Quakers held morning and Sunday services, and arranged other meetings at which members of different faiths were encouraged to give their 'Basic Beliefs'.

Some of these were: 'I think God is a big brother' or 'a friend or 'a silent partner' (this from the tax expert). Once they invite the camp nihilist. He held forth for hours on a sort of post-Nietzscheanism with forebodings of Existentialism. It came to be known in camp as 'the philosophy of Neither-Nor'.

Nearly every week brought a visiting lecturer: a C.I.O. educational director, who was also a Brethren minister; a missionary who had coined the watchword 'CIHU!' from 'Can I Help You?' This became the morning song of the coyotes. The individualists among us were rather disillusioned by a disciple of Gandhi, who admired the structure and discipline of the army. He wanted us to form a C.O. Legion and work for a pacifist dictatorship. A champion of decentralization declared city life was driving people crazy, and emphasized the word by looking ill. The talk I enjoyed most was by a very ample, very jolly Negro schoolteacher, who countered segregation in buses by putting his head in and inquiring, 'Dare I intrude?'

Just about every denomination was represented. These include several Fundamentalist sects: First Century Gospel, Christadelphian, and Seventh Day Adventist. One man belonged to a single-church sect called 'The Church of the Four-Leafed Clover' which preached the gospel of optimism. Appropriately he was a Fuller Brush salesman. Another sect believed that a religion should have no name. Consequently its members were officially listed as having no religion.

With the Associated Bible Students I waged a small unsuccessful aesthetic-religious war. My off-hour problem was that of the artist in society, to find a small, unused corner in which to write. At different times I tried the trucks, where my lantern convolved a regional meeting of mosquitoes; the Water Tower, where my pages blew away; the Drying Room, in among steaming sheets and long underwear; a cubicle behind the Co-op Store, a third panel away from a continuously practising bugler; and the pump room, where the pump started up like a car with its bearings burned. More orthodox quarters were out of the question. Either they were in use, or immediately became so. Everybody, it seemed, was acquiring the need to be 'alone with his thoughts'.

I had finally discovered, I thought, the ideally undesirable location: a small shed built over the camp cesspool. Then the Bible Students moved in. They wanted my Ivory Tower to re-

ir Bibles in. They thought I could do my writing anywhere, and I had the same opinion of their Bible-reading.

We took our problem to the Educational Secretary, who worked out a Judgement of Solomon, dividing up the hours so that nobody was satisfied. Privately, he admitted it was he who precipitated the crisis by trying to get them out of the Educational Building, a shed housing several 'classrooms' and the map library. Their dismal droning of revival hymns made it impossible to read in the library. But the Bible Boys went right on using the classroom for dirges and the solitary shack for quiet meditation on the scriptures.

The Jehovah's Witnesses numbered General Eisenhower's mother among their members. A pacifist paper interviewed her. She was quoted as pleased that her famous son had done so well at what he had chosen, but very sorry he had chosen it. Most J.W.s went to jail. They claimed deferment on the ground that each was a minister.

'The Bible predicts everything that has come to pass,' one of them told me. 'Why it even predicted tyre-rationing.' He showed Isaiah iii:

18. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their anklets, and their tires like the moon,

19. The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, . . . 'Isn't that jewelery?' I asked.

'Oh no. See, he even has chains for wet weather. And haven't you noticed how many cars are noisy these days? Their mufflers are blown out and they can't get replacements.'

The moon suggests something shiny, like silver. Not black, like a tyre.'

'Isaiah', he said, 'even foretold white-wall tyres!'

The Biosophical Society boys were somewhat less imaginatively rational. They arrived devout students of Spinoza. His concept of a Supreme Being, they said, was 'a rational faith, which did away with superstitious fears'. All this adding up of qualities into a substance sounded very airless to me, the epitome of non-being. I wondered aloud if a certain amount of fear and superstition weren't natural.

A few days later one of them went hollering through the woods for First Aid. We gathered around expecting a major

catastrophe. It seems he'd scratched his finger on a bramble. 'Infection might set in!' he cried. A First-Aid man arrived on the double and applied a magic balm.

There was among us a reputed adept in Eastern mysticism, communicant of Gerald Heard who grew a beard and went about barefoot. Somehow he converted the Biosophs *en bloc*. They formed with him a neo-yogi fellowship. One of their practices was to lie on their bunks emptying themselves of thought; an intenser variant of Quaker meditation. Since everybody did this, without effort, it attracted small notice. But there were rumours of mysterious early morning rites.

One night I stayed up working in the library. About 5 a.m. they arrived, carrying flashlights through a pouring rain. They were nonplussed at finding me there, since, as they explained, their services were conducted in darkness. I agreed to move to the far end of the room, under a shaded lamp. In the gloom at their end they sat in a circle on the floor. The silence was intense. I was concluding they'd all gone to sleep—which, considering they did this every morning, seemed not unreasonable—when one of them exclaimed, in muffled tones, 'The spirit moves!' Other murmurs came from the group. Then I heard a great hushed rustling. All that could make out were their shadows, sprawling hugely on the farthest wall. These rose and fell rhythmically, like the circling of crows over a cornfield. This must be, I thought, their ceremonial dance. As my eyes grew used to the darkness I realized they were all getting up and putting on their raincoats.

In a camp rife with cults, no one was immune. I became high priest to O'Malley the Rain-Bringer. His cardboard image hung suspended from the rafters, a little man with a battered hat, magic cigar and wings; the fairy godfather of the P.M. comic strip 'Barnaby'. Services were held on days when it rained and when it didn't work.

O'Malley is not one of your naive primitive deities founded on superstition.

No. O'Malley is a scientific divinity.

Science is fallible.

O'Malley is fallible.

That which is not founded on dogma is founded on hypothesis

and may suffer a sad metamorphosis.

The creed acknowledged a failing of the god. He often brought a G.I. rain at quitting-time, clearing around 6.30 a.m. when the night-watchman woke the camp. To stand watch was a popular job. Adding it to a day's work entitled one to a 'long week-end' leave. The Night-watchman's Spiel, our new art form, read the gospel of O'Malley, along with three important items of news: the weather—especially if it was raining—the temperature and the breakfast menu. Some breakfasts were better slept through, although the kitchen crew denied that meals had been scaled to 8c. per man.

To avoid 'pushbutton eggs' or fritters as cold as doorknobs, some of us had electric stoves beside our cots. An engineering cadent shared his with me. Its heating unit had burned out, but we wove new ones out of discarded door-springs. These were rather less tempered, but worked very well. Whenever we dug in the stove lights went down all over camp.

After breakfast two work-bells sounded. Most of the camp's dressing was done in this five-minute interval. We wore to project whatever old work-clothes we could scrape up; some of us looked like ash-men, others more like Harlequin. On the road we were sometimes mistaken for P.O.W.s, but, as we explained, P.O.W.s were paid.

We stood around the trucks while roll-call was read and the complements of different crews made up. These varied from day to day, according to whether the tractor had broken down, or the dynamite supply had run out. The Survey Crew went ahead setting stakes for the cut. The Clearing Crew followed in three sections, wielding brushaxes ('bushhooks', one of the foremen called them), axes and saws. Behind them the Tractor Crew or 'main-gang' 'snaked out' the logs; the Dynamite Crew blasted bumps, and the Drag-lines dug the ditch and heaped up spoilbanks.

Outside of work hours, the camp was run by C.O.s from the tractor down. On project the Government men took over, mostly local farmers in the Department of Agriculture service. Some of them enjoyed the role of slave-driver. They picked out 'company men' among the C.O.s and made them crew 'co-ordinators', thus shifting the friction.

Wrapping ourselves in blankets, we sat on side tool-lockers and goggled off. Everybody on the road had to be waved to, for P.R.

Our Public Relations were good, the project being locally popular. The trucks branched off on dirt roads looping the tiny river hidden in the woods. We passed ramshackle unpainted lean-tos, from which barefooted children ran. Farther on would be a small ploughed hill, the curved furrows grazing a clump of gravestones. The roads dwindled to tracks between the trees, the truck bowing and scraping its way through. At the day's station we unloaded, got our tools and filed off through the woods.

The swamps grew mostly cypress, maple, gum and stunted pine. Vines of poison ivy, sometimes half a foot thick, climbed the trees. 'Painting classes' were held in the infirmary every morning. There were several varieties of snake; some said cottonmouths. Spring and fall, the swamps were high, with a coating of ice in winter. We worked in army-reject boots, not all seaworthy. In summer the woods were so dry we sometimes fell in the river before seeing it.

Most of us were as green as the timber we were hacking. The axe-men nibbled the trees; occasionally their own feet. The saw-crews hung up one tree on another. 'Lifers' were men who pitched right into the work. Equally principled were the diehard who refused more than a stroke or two. An R.T.W. (Refusal To Work) meant the loss of three furlough days, but a court ruling had decided that one stroke signified willingness. Equally celebrated was a case denying C.O.s workmen's compensation for injuries; since we weren't paid, we could not be regarded as employees.

During dry spells the camp was on forest-fire call. The local volunteer system had broken down during the war. We were apt to be dispatched anywhere within a thirty-mile radius, sometimes farther. Under local wardens, we dug and patrolled 'lines' around the fires, which were then allowed to burn themselves out. Eating their way into the now bone-dry swamps, the smouldered for days. Occasionally one got away by 'jumping the line'. There would be a day of feverish activity establishing a new line.

Time collapsed and expanded like an accordion. Individual days were long or short, but the continuity of camp life swallowed them up into something that seemed alternately endless and not time at all. Furloughs disappeared into it as if they had never

ed. Saturdays there was a mad scramble away from camp on part of those with leave. Deals were made to switch crews, to away an hour early, to get rides. Returns were calculated as the Monday morning work-bell as possible. Some lived too way to go home. Others had no money and worked evenings on the neighbouring farms, topping corn or picking crops. The musician went to Ocean City, a sleazy little resort town about fifty miles away, and lined up jobs for a couple of dozen men, hanging on tables or at hot-dog stands, nights and week-ends. In the winter there was very little outside employment to be had. A few went into Salisbury once a week and spent the night swabbing down a restaurant.

Accidents interrupted the camp monotony. The assistant director was unfairly dismissed. For once everybody in camp united on an issue. The Service Committee apologized but did nothing about it. Two Selective Service officials, on a conducted tour of the camp, fell in the river. Mumps struck us and all leaves were cancelled. New Year's Eve a case of beer was smuggled in, in the car with a visiting Quaker dignitary. To supplement the sparse diet, huge 'Doovers' would be organized, to which everyone contributed any eatables he had received from home. Some even felt I'd strayed into the action of a movie; a very cheap production in which, not being able to decide on a plot, they'd tossed bits of several for good measure. By a shift of focus the same thing was infinitely depressing or funny.

The most depressing was the general feeling of impotence. The desire of pacifism to develop 'a positive programme' was much frustrated. We tried to comfort ourselves with the thought that to negate a negation was itself a positive act; that in swimming against the tide it was a gain at least to remain where you were. But it was hard not to succumb to one of the occupational hazards of conscientious objection—self-pity. The others had a martyr-complex and smugness. Anyone who thinks that it is right when everybody else is wrong is prone to them: they have nothing to do with whether or not he is correct in that opinion.

A few went into the army because they felt they were being of use where they were. Another few worked hard at achieving a medical discharge—extremely difficult for a C.O.—by cultivating their latent peculiarities. They went without washing,

shaving or making their beds. They took continual S.Q.s (S in Quarters), or if sent on project, promptly fell in the river. At night they gathered in the kitchen and heaved knives and crockery at the walls.

I had the greatest respect for the men who walked out voluntarily went to jail. My own feeling was that a prison sentence was excessive martyrdom unless absolutely necessary. Public opinion, when the public knew the facts, was predominantly sympathetic. This was perhaps the first war fought almost entirely by pacifists, in the sense that they were people who consciously detested what they were doing. Perhaps the next stage would be to refuse to do what they detested. At any rate I didn't think that objectors should imply that public opinion against them was anything like what it had been in the First World War.

However, the men who walked out were not protesting at the public's treatment of them, but at the lag between what the law had stated and the way these liberal provisions had been carried out by S.S. In prison the C.O.s were a thorn in the side of the administration. They exposed conditions in several penitentiaries as a result of which State officials had to resign. They spread non-violent techniques among the prisoners. After a recent outburst at Leavenworth, an army correctional institution, in which there were several deaths and many casualties, a strike took place in the Danbury jail. The strikers there refused to work and refused to eat. There was no violence of any sort. Danbury housed a sizeable C.O. contingent.

In the autumn of 1944 the Friends, for reasons of economy, gave up the camp. For a time we thought the Government, which by now was running a few camps, would take over. Things would be worse, or better. Men prepared to leave, or stay. Food at least would be plentiful, since army requisitions could be drawn on. And the monthly allowance would rise to \$5.

But instead the camp was assigned to the Mennonites. We had to transfer. We could go to other camps, most of them remote, or we could take 'detached service'. The detached services, of which one was eligible after serving three months in a base camp, were principally at farm labour or in mental hospitals. In both of these the work-hours were considerably longer. Other possibilities were the 'guinea-pig' experiments. These inclu-

posure to atypical pneumonia, yellow jaundice or starvation. It was rumoured that the starvation experiment had originally been intended for France, to determine the best methods of counteracting malnutrition. A State Department official, irked because the initiating approach had been to General de Gaulle, instead of through him, had had it quashed. It was now necessary to induce artificial starvation in C.O.s by a diet limited to rutabaga.

I was just about resigned to a Government camp with the glorious name of Germfask when the chance came to work in a State psychiatric hospital near Washington. My year at Chestnut Lodge would take me too far afield for this account. It was typical of C.O. hospital work. There were too few of us to be treated as a 'unit'. We were individually absorbed into the life of the hospital. My work included special duty with Dr. Harry Stack Sullivan, the founder and chief theoretician of the Washington School of Psychiatry. His 'interpersonal theory' of human relations is considered by many a significant advance on the pioneering work of Sigmund Freud.

Chestnut Lodge was one of the first, and is still one of the few, hospitals run on experimental psycho-analytic lines. The nursing staff were required to take analysis. This was not only of advantage to them; it gave them an insight into the problems of the patients, breaking down the invisible barrier between patient and nursing staff. Mental difficulties were seen to be matters of degree, not differences in kind.

Toward the end of my stay there, I was assigned to deliver a lecture transferring to a State hospital. A Brethren unit of about twenty-five C.O.s worked there. I asked the psychiatrist about them.

'I don't know how we could have got through the war without them,' he said. 'Your philosophy seems to be just right for dealing with mental patients. We had to dismiss one man for excessive aggressiveness, but that was a notable exception.'

The ju-jitsu of non-violence, which throws the aggressor off his balance, had proved itself, then, on the institutional level. How would it take to reach the international? How many grants would be made for such research, as compared with atomic energy?

'I don't like to think what we'll do when they leave,' he conceded. 'Go back to the old system, I suppose.'

The old system meant attendants who are underpaid and untrained, often moronic, frequently Hitlers bred by under privilege, who wreak their spite on people unable to defend themselves. Fired from one hospital, they move across a state line to another. Mental patients are like C.O.s in that they are better treated than ever before, on paper. Statutes and provisions having been drawn up for them, they are dismissed from mind; rather like a subconscious.

I had to wait for a receipt for this patient. The doctor was asking her some questions, to get her case-history and also, judged, her 'grasp of fact'.

'What happened yesterday?' he asked.

'Oh yesterday? Why yesterday it said over the radio that the women and girls in Washington, D.C., were taking off their silk panties and throwing them away.'

'Really?' said the doctor. 'And what was the cause of all this celebrating?'

A crafty look came into her eyes.

'Well,' she said, 'they say the war has ended.'

WILFRED MELLERS STYLIZATION IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH MUSIC

I

IN his recent British Academy lecture on Milton, Mr. T. S. Eliot made several remarks which are of general application to the art in Britain at the present. He pointed out that twenty years ago he had made, as a practising poet, certain criticisms of Milton: for it seemed to him at the time that the Miltonic kind of stylization had been, and could be again, a disastrous influence on English poetry. Just as a Donne had been necessary to imbue poetry with immediacy and vigour when the stylizations of the Elizabethans had ceased to bear any vital relation to life; just as Wordsworth brought the accent of speech once more to verse, after the flat

abstract stylizations of eighteenth-century Miltonics; so English poetry in the nineteen-twenties needed a poet who could establish contact with contemporary speech and life, in lieu of the decaying conventionalism of Victorian art. The mock simplicities of the Georgians were no answer, for they achieved their directness by direct means—by evading the perplexities and perversities of contemporary life. We now see, of course, that Mr. Eliot's own work, more than anyone's, was responsible for the decisive orientation.

Now, however, Eliot believes that the position has changed. An artist's job is to respond to experience at first hand, and he cannot hope to do this through a morass of effete conventions which to him are meaningless. He must, as a start, prune off such accretions of tradition as are to him irrelevant, so that he can use his experience for what it is. But this is only the first part of his task. He has to learn to respond to what is there, in the world around him; but what matters to *us* is what he does with his experience, the pattern of morality he weaves from it, the wisdom he finds in it. If the old stylizations are inadequate to this pattern—then in a transitional phase of civilization they will be—then the artist, and his age, must evolve new ones. The personal responsibility of the artist becomes more acute in times when there is no generally accepted body of social values and beliefs; the creation of adequate stylizations then depends very largely on his own, relatively self-conscious efforts. His task is difficult because he must himself create a stylization which is both logically self-consistent, and intelligible to his potential audience. Though it may be a personal invention, a stylization is also a social phenomenon, because it is, if it serves any purpose at all, a means of communication. Milton—with the possible exception of his 'master' Spenser—was the first great artist who had deliberately invented a stylization both of poetic technique and of theological speculation; Dante was more fortunate in that his stylization and mythology were in the main presented to him by his community. There is plenty of evidence in *Paradise Lost* that Milton felt the strain; but that the strain is there is one of the reasons why Milton's attempt to create a stylization may not be altogether irrelevant to the problems of contemporary British or European poets. Whether or no one agrees with Mr. Eliot's revised case about Milton is not here in question; what matters is that it seems to me

to have some bearing on the present position in British music. During the nineteenth century our music declined into a sleep of solemnity and *empty* conventionalism even more dreary than that of Victorian poetry. In the twentieth century the first phase of our musical history has been the attempt to reassert the accent of English speech. In Holst's work the pruning and purging of moribund conventions is evident, the restatement of the essence of the English line. In Vaughan Williams' work we find the re-creation of the traditions of our more distant past. It has often been said, of course, that Holst and Vaughan Williams are not really contemporary composers at all, but are comparable rather with the Georgian poets, in that they recover the accent of English speech only by evading the issue and living spiritually in the past. This case may be true of some of their early work, and it is certainly true of much of the music of their disciples; but one should not generalize about it; each work must be judged on its own merits. There are many ways of using the past, and some are escapist and some are not. If Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony is escapist, so is *Little Gidding*. The objection *has* been made, to Mr. Eliot's work, on more than one occasion; but in his case enlightened, and even not so enlightened, opinion has come to see that the objection is frivolous and superficial. I believe that, in their relation to 'England's past', in their reinterpretation of the seventeenth century, the sophisticated and Anglican Eliot and the unsophisticated and Puritan Vaughan Williams have more in common than is usually realized. (I am not, anyway, sure that unsophisticated is an appropriate adjective to apply to the creator of, say, the weirdly beautiful *Magnificat*.) And they have this in common also: they are the two figures who, in contemporary British poetry and music, may be said to have attained to classic status.

Now, all musical idioms are artificial; otherwise they would not be art. The pentatonic scale may be acoustically more 'natural' than the chromatic, but it is still a convention, which entails its own discipline. In a sense, nothing could be more stylized—more narrowly stylized—than the music of those minor disciples of Vaughan Williams who, lacking his strength of character and moral fibre, were content to live on the vernacular of the past without establishing any connexion between that past and contemporary needs. Therefore it is safer to say not that in the pos-

Vaughan Williams' generation of English music there is a renewed interest in stylization, but that there is developing an interest in stylizations of a very different type. The stylization in both Vaughan Williams and Eliot is rooted in the English devotional tradition; we may note that the poetry of Donne, Herbert, and Vaughan has been of critical importance to both of them, and the fact that Vaughan Williams puts the stress mainly on Bunyan rather than the Anglicans points more to a difference of temperament than to a fundamental disparity between their relations to the seventeenth century. From this point of view the real successor to Holst and Vaughan Williams is not an elegiac composer such as Moeran or Finzi, but Holst's pupil Edmund Rubbra—a major composer whose work is never archaistic or regressive but whose convention grows spontaneously out of the religious traditions of England's music in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and he, like Eliot and Vaughan Williams, has long been preoccupied with our seventeenth-century devotional poets. The word 'spontaneously' as used above is, I suppose, a metaphor; one employs it merely to indicate the *nature* of his stylization. It is a stylization which is not consciously *contrived*. In most of the work of his and other generations of English composers there is a great deal of contrivance, if one may use the word without depreciatory implications. There is a strong element of the virtuoso, of the rhetorical presentation of emotion; stylization becomes something in the nature of a *tour de force*, as it so conspicuously is in *Paradise Lost*.

The virtuoso element in *Paradise Lost*, the deliberate cult of a rhetorical stylization, points away from the native devotional tradition towards another element in seventeenth-century culture—the tendencies which are sometimes conveniently summarized in the word baroque. Now although it may have started as religious sublimation, the baroque element became identified with a secular impulse, a theatrical humanism. Vaughan Williams and Rubbra, having fundamentally religious minds, are able to re-establish contact with the seventeenth-century devotional tradition, and at the same time to create music which is vitally an expression of the twentieth century. Minor elegiac composers like Finzi who are at odds with the contemporary world and are unable, or unwilling, to assimilate it, may use the seventeenth-century devotional tradition as an escape. But most contemporary

English composers do not naturally think and feel in religious terms, like Vaughan Williams and Rubbra; while on the other hand they are not content merely to regress into the past. For them, the secular baroque element in our seventeenth-century culture offers a new start which, being explicitly self-conscious and sophisticated, seems especially appropriate to their needs.

II

An interest in the baroque is implicit in the very nature of Britten's operatic experiments; for opera is a secular and social art which entails a high degree of stylization. In the first place, an operatic tradition is the product of a highly developed sophistication. If it is not to seem ridiculous ('an exotic and irrational entertainment'), opera must create its own world, which is consistent with itself. Why so much nineteenth-century opera—most of the products of the *verismo* tradition for instance—seems unconvincing is not because it is conventional, but because it is not conventional enough¹; or rather because its conventions are confused and inconsistent.

An aesthetically satisfying opera will depend upon the existence of an elaborate code of conventions, the purpose of which is clearly understood by the creators, the performers, and the audience. These conditions are likely to be fulfilled only if the aesthetic code bears some relation to the code of manners and morals of a community. This is why the great age of baroque opera occurred in Europe when the religious mainspring of society was worn out, and the social and humanist impulses were being rigorously classified and codified. Aristocratic France of the age of Louis XIV was a society magnificently endowed for the creation of opera, as it was for the creation of heroic tragedy, for it had a belief in an elaborate etiquette of behaviour which owed its significance to the fact that it was passionate. The code of etiquette was only one aspect of a moral code; and the deeper one looks in the art of the time the more complex and profound are the facets of experience which the code seems to embrace. The formal equilibrium in Racine and Molière and Lully and Couperin is significant because it really faces up to the problem of achieving a civilized deportment which does not oversimplify. The vagaries and complexities of the individual human consciousness

¹Cf. Eliot on the Elizabethan drama.

re fully allowed for, in their complexities of metaphor and subtleties of rhythm and inflection; while at the same time the symmetry of the couplet, or the rigour of the harmonic period or the rondeau structure, uphold Society. The two sets of values do not destroy one another; on the contrary the tension between them is the motive power of the art's vitality.

English culture never attained to this classical equilibrium, this mature sophistication. In the early part of the seventeenth century, the court of Charles I was to some extent modelled on the Hotel d'Amboillet. Henrietta Maria's Courts of Love encouraged an exhibitionistic preoccupation with the more esoteric reaches of passion, Crashaw's baroque verse transformed the cult of Mariology into a deification of the uninhibited libido, and the elaborate music of William Lawes showed the instinct towards virtuosity both technical and emotional. The rise of the court Masque paralleled the growth of the French *ballet de cour*; and one might almost say that Ben Jonson's two tragedies, *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, represented a tendency towards a more stylized, classical tragedy which might, in the second half of the century, have led to an English 'heroic' tragedy complementary to that of Corneille and Racine. But just as the Civil War corrupted the devotional tradition, so it destroyed the secular tradition of the baroque. The Blues of the restored aristocracy had lost the civilization of the country-house culture of a Lord Falkland, and had become associated with the middle-class culture of the City. Charles II's own taste was exactly that of the middle class; ('he was a lover of light songs and endured ye accompanyinge very well, providing he could beat the time . . . and as to skill, he used to despise it & saye Have I not Ears, to Judge as well as any one?')¹. And so we had Dryden's pasteboard heroics, instead of heroic tragedy; and notwithstanding Purcell—the Restoration farrago of music and drama and variety-show instead of opera. Nothing could more clearly indicate the decay of a stylization than the failure of Restoration opera; and nothing could show more clearly how a confusion over stylizations is the expression of a confusion over moral values. Lully may not have been as great a composer as Purcell (though he is a much greater composer than he is usually made out to be); but he had many advantages over Purcell that were of more than topical and local significance. He understood

¹Roger North: *A Musickall Grammarian*.

his stylization, and he believed in it. When he bows and raises his hat, it means something. Purcell's civilization goes on bowing and scraping, but more from habit than conviction; it has forgotten what the obeisances signify. Purcell is a much greater man than his age warranted; I think he would have been a still more impressive composer if his age had been in step with him.

Now the twentieth-century composer of opera in England has to deal with the same problem as concerned Purcell, only in a much more acute form. If the acuteness of the problem is clearly a disadvantage in some ways, in others it is an advantage; for the twentieth-century composer knows, as Purcell did not know, that he is out of step, that his society is not likely to present him with a convention or a stylization which he can find adequate. He is forced to invent his own stylization. In so doing he must learn what he can from the attempts of our seventeenth-century composers towards an operatic convention; and he must do what he can to make his stylization intelligible to his audience. He is committed, from the start, to self-consciousness; he will be highly sophisticated, a virtuoso, a rhetorician, and—in no discreditable sense—an exhibitionist.

Even before he started to write operas, Benjamin Britten has proved that he was superbly qualified to create opera of a type which appears to be demanded by contemporary circumstances. We have never had a composer of greater virtuosity, or with a stronger feeling for rhetoric. The notorious eclecticism of his style was a part of his search for a conscious stylization; he took what he wanted not only from Purcell, who tried to absorb Continental stylizations into the English tradition, but from Handel, who imposed an Italianate stylization on the English tradition willy-nilly; and from any other European composer who seemed to serve his purpose. His technique, in recitative especially and to a lesser degree in aria, in the use of the chorus and the approach to instrumentation, owes much to seventeenth-century baroque opera; while at the same time Britten seems to have felt that his audience, in an amorphous society such as ours, could not be expected to swallow a high degree of *theatrical* stylization. He therefore combines a very sophisticated musical stylization with a certain naturalism in dramatic technique. Although a compromise, the effect appears to be happy, perhaps because Britten's recitative, though consistently stylized, is clear

—like Monteverdi's—a sublimation of speech. Certainly *Peter Grimes*, which uses this fusion of techniques, seems to me both musically and dramatically more interesting than *Lucrezia*, which follows close to seventeenth-century baroque methods in both musical and theatrical stylization. In his best work, Britten has succeeded in creating a fusion, not a confusion of stylizations; and he has succeeded in making his 'baroque' opera a part of the English tradition. There was a time when everyone used to say in a rather undecending way that he was 'clever'; undoubtedly the cleverest thing he has done is, almost single-handed, of his own thought and creative effort, to have succeeded where Purcell failed. Of course, this does not mean that he is a greater composer than Purcell; indeed his historical significance does not necessarily entail consideration of his works' intrinsic value. But merely on historical grounds his importance is great enough; I think he has proved that, in the contemporary world at least, cleverness may be a very valuable asset.

In Michael Tippett's work we may observe a similar interest in the baroque. His music is rooted more closely in the native tradition than Britten's; but his development of Purcellian melisma to extravagant lengths is related to the stylization of baroque virtuoso music. That it is extravagant does not, of course, mean that it is any the less expressive. Tippett, again, is a very self-conscious composer, preoccupied with the creation of a stylization which is native, and at the same time related to the European tradition. And again his self-consciousness, his intelligence, is a virtue at a time when artists are compelled to think about their position, if they are to be good artists. But although Tippett is very intelligent, he is not clever as Britten is. He has not the younger man's uncanny lucidity of technique, though he has a deeper sense of an underdriving purpose. There is a personal significance in the whirling baroque line of Tippett's cantata *Youth's End*, or in the recitatives of *A Child of our Time*, which we do not find in the more brilliantly objectified (and dramatically convincing) laments of Grimes. It is, of course, Britten's achievement that all the 'emotion' is crystallized into the drama; but I doubt if the objectification could have been as complete if the pressure of the experience had been as intense as it is in Tippett's best work. For this reason, one awaits Tippett's projected opera with the liveliest curiosity.

Britten is in complete command of his stylization; in some of Tippett's work the pressure of the feeling does not find an entirely adequate 'objective correlative'. This may be because he has more to say; the task he has set himself is more difficult. Again, I think it is part of Britten's cleverness that he knows just how much he is capable of, at a given moment; he knows how much he has to offer, and how much his stylization will stand, and the two usually fit. From this point of view, he is cleverer than Tippett, and cleverer than William Walton, too. In much of his work—most obviously in *Belshazzar's Feast*—Walton uses a rhetorical, virtuoso technique, 'exhibiting' emotion in the typical baroque fashion. But, whereas in Tippett's case the emotion is too much for the stylization, in Walton's the stylization is often too much for the feeling. He gets carried away by his own rhetoric, loses control; (the last movement of the Symphony is a case in point, not to mention the Violin Concerto). And yet, apart from Britten, none of our composers has a more brilliant rhetorical sense. No doubt Walton's long-promised opera will show whether he can achieve the most difficult equilibrium between stylized rhetoric and emotion. Although, of course, less fluent, he has many of Britten's qualities, including an admirable sense of showmanship; one imagines that, at the very least, a Walton opera would be (like *Peter Grimes*) exciting.

The tendency towards a 'baroque' stylization in contemporary British music is not confined, however, to vocal, dramatic music as we have already suggested, it is implicit in much of Britten's Tippett's and Walton's purely instrumental work. An even clearer, more consistent, case of the use of instrumental baroque stylizations is provided by the music of Alan Rawsthorne. Rawsthorne writes very little for the voice. In the field of instrumental music the three main techniques which he employs—toccata, aria and variation—are the basic techniques of classical baroque music; and they are all opposed to the dramatic dualism of the nineteenth-century sonata. They are not attempts to express an 'inner conflict', they are attempts to create a stylization of emotion. Again, my feeling is that Walton's *Symphony* does not wear so well as Rawsthorne's *Symphonic Studies* because it shows a confusion of techniques. It tries to be both a dramatic symphony based on the 'conflict' theme of the nineteenth century, and a work of baroque rhetoric, and it does not quite succeed at either.

In Rawsthorne's work one should not, I think, look for any dramatic development, or argument proceeding from one point to another. Both toccata and variation use the baroque method of decoration and embellishment; and, in the little *Bagatelles* or the two-violin *Variations* as in the big *Symphonic Studies*, the linear motives that form the material of the work are not really 'developed'; they are presented from different emotional aspects, and the emotional effect of the whole work is as it were a common denominator between the various aspects. The composer's skill—and the music's value—depend on the way in which the various emotional facets are integrated.

One of the most remarkable qualities of Rawsthorne's music is that he has managed to reconcile the European sophistication of his technique with the native tradition. He has no obvious relation to Purcell or sixteenth-century polyphony—as have, in their different ways, Britten, Tippett, Walton and Rubbra; indeed his technique is closer to that of the first half of the eighteenth century, when we had no vigorous local tradition at all. And yet, though he uses a 'neo-diatonic' and chromatic technique which is comparable with Hindemith's, his lines none the less have a muscular strength and precision that belongs to, or is an offspring of, the same world as that of the late work of Vaughan Williams. The *Raconne* of the piano concerto is perhaps the most impressive instance. The recent work of Alan Bush shows a similar compromise between a stringently disciplined stylization and an indigenous culture; and he too frequently uses a technique related to the seventeenth-century principle of *division*. (Cf. in particular the *Sassacaglia* of the *English Suite*.)

The technique which Bush has employed in his latest works is really a kind of serial technique, within a fundamentally diatonic framework. It is, perhaps, a more local version of the *chromatic* serial technique which is found in twelve-note music. This, too, is related to 'baroque' methods in that it is a technique of perpetual variation, and essentially monistic, rather than dualistic like the nineteenth-century sonata. But whereas the various baroque stylizations we have so far discussed are all attempts to reconcile the past with the present, the local with the European, the twelve-note technique is essentially a revolutionary movement, and is international rather than local or even European. The fact that some British composers, notably Elisabeth Lutyens and Humphrey

Searle, are now adopting this technique warrants a few reflection on its potential significance to our music in the immediate future.

III

It is possible that a more international musical idiom has been encouraged by the residence, in this country, of distinguished Continental composers and scholars such as Roberto Gerhard, Egon Wellesz, and Ernst Meyer. And there is considerable logical justification for it, since the heterogeneous nature of contemporary society does not stimulate a vigorous local culture. Whether we like it or not, contemporary society is becoming more international in outlook. The serial technique of composition forms a valid basis for creative work by composers of any nationality, just as the technique of sixteenth-century polyphony was basically the same all over Europe. One can see no reason why it should not offer as great a scope for variety of personal expression within the system, as did the earlier polyphonic style; certainly there is no uniformity of feeling in Schönberg, Berg and Webern or in Lutyens and Searle. It is true that the rules of sixteenth-century polyphony were derived from 'nature' in the sense that their purpose was to produce music that should be easily and effectively singable; whereas the twelve-note system, being based on the equal tempered chromatic scale, is a more 'abstract' convention in the sense that it does not spring out of practical exigencies. But, as we have already seen, our inevitably self-conscious society can only be expected to employ very sophisticated and self-conscious stylizations. One must admit the logic of the case which maintains that the twelve-note system—though it may have had local origins in the twilight of Viennese romanticism—is consistent, international, and contemporary; one must admit that adherents of the method, though still in a minority, are not declining, but increasing—in France, Italy, Germany, America, Latin-America, Scandinavia, and in this country.

There is, of course, a certain fanaticism about the disciples of the twelve-note method which may, perhaps, be thought to contrast ill with the English gift for compromise. For the twelve-note composer compromise is impossible, and highly undesirable; and Mr. Humphrey Searle, whose expositions of twelve-note music are as acute as they are lucid, has said that in his opinion a man such as Hindemith is on the wrong track, because he refuses to admit

the full implications of chromaticism, but attempts to combine traditional diatonic with chromatic elements. This is what most contemporary composers do, and I cannot myself see that it is undesirable; indeed it seems to me that in the past evolution has most commonly proceeded by compromise of this kind. When I challenged Mr. Searle on this point, he said that he felt there was some disparity between the diatonic and chromatic elements in Hindemith's work, that the two did not fit. In effect, this simply means that Mr. Searle is making an adverse judgement on the quality of Hindemith's music, not on the principle on which his work is based. I feel myself that tradition—for us, the English tradition—is too important to be thrown over; and I am not altogether sure that throwing it over may not in itself be evasive, rather than realistic. On the other hand, I am prepared to admit that the opposite view may be tenable. It may be that our music and our civilization have reached a point when tradition *ought* to be discarded in favour of a new, more international start; and it may be only timidity that holds me back from so fundamental a revolution. In any case the decision cannot be made lightly; the history of our music during the next twenty years is bound to be as critical, as crucial, as the history of our civilization.

Certainly there is much in this country's twelve-note venture which is very stimulating, and perhaps I may say—since I have introduced the personal note—that it has had some influence on my own creative work. No composer, in search of a stylized discipline, can fail to profit from a study of the serial method, whether or no he himself fully adopts it.

IV

At the very least, the use by some English composers of so radically revolutionary an idiom as the twelve-note technique suggests that the 'new directions', which we have been trying to trace in these pages, are likely to be followed through consistently for some considerable time. The tendency towards a highly sophisticated stylization, more European and international than local, is likely to continue. A stringent discipline, rather than a rhapsodic utterance, will probably be encouraged, whether it be the purely musical discipline of a serial technique, twelve-note or otherwise, or the discipline involved in the subservience of one's personal emotion to an extra-musical purpose, as in the opera. The second

alternative may seem to have the more direct social validity; assuming that the present large and lively audience for contemporary opera is more than a flash in the pan. But, of course, no social problem is independent of a personal problem; every work of art is, or should be, an act of collaboration. Nowadays more than ever, the composer must find a stylization that is logical and convincing to himself before he can hope to convince his potential public. The twelve-note adherents at least put first things first; they are trying, with integrity, to set their own house in order. The possibility cannot be ruled out that they may yet prove, if not intrinsically the most significant, none the less historically the most fructifying element in this transitional phase in the evolution of our musical culture.

C. M. BOWRA

STUDIES IN GENIUS: V

THE ODES OF HORACE

IT is the fate of Horace's Odes that anyone who knows them at all usually knows them so well that he hardly treats them as poetry. A familiarity inculcated at school does not actually kill our appreciation of them but makes us like them more for their secondary than for their primary qualities. They are indeed rich in the accidental qualities of poetry. Their abundance of quotable lines, their wise observations on many aspects of life, their closeness to much that the ordinary man knows and loves, even their wonderful technical accomplishment, all conspire to hide the fact that they were intended to be poetry and should make their first appeal as poetry. Unlike the work of Catullus or Lucretius they do not overwhelm the young by an irresistible onslaught on the sensibility, but appeal in a quieter, less exciting way which is not quite what youth expects. This habit, formed early in life, may persist into middle age. We accept Horace; we admire, we like him. But he has not that special, sacred place which we accord to those whose inspiration sweeps in irresistible flight and carries all before it. In the end we may perhaps dismiss him and say that

compared with Catullus, he lacks the authentic divine fire. Or, conversely, we may admire him for just this reason and find his mastery of technique so satisfying that we ask for nothing more. But both positions are based on false assumptions. Horace is indeed a great poet, and great not merely for his apt choice of words but for a strange and special power in them.

The usual approach to the Odes is partly due to the comparisons which we inevitably make between Horace and Catullus or Sappho or Anacreon. For such comparisons he must bear the responsibility. These poets were in some ways his models. He adopted some of their metres and themes and phrases. At the end of Book III he brags proudly that he has been the first to adapt Aeolian song to Italian verse. Naturally we compare him with his masters and find that he lacks their essential qualities, their speed and directness, their uncomplicated and unconcealed emotions, their divine simplicity, their irresistible, pure song. Whether he writes about the gods or love or war or wine, we feel that something is missing which his models have in abundance, not merely a simple, unadorned approach to experience but a fire and a magic which survive in them, as Horace himself saw when he said of Sappho:

vivuntque commissi calores
Aeoliae fidibus puellae.¹

As long as we compare Horace with Sappho or Catullus and judge his work by theirs, we find him wanting. Yet though he began the comparison himself, it is not in any resemblance to them that his strength lies. He lived in a different age and possessed different qualities. To understand him and to appreciate his achievement we must look not to his models but to his own gifts and to the conditions which formed his tastes and ideas. We shall then see how remarkable his work is and how worthy of the name of poetry. Poets may be roughly divided into two classes. In the first, when creative inspiration comes, it has such a force that a poem is written in a single, uninterrupted fit and finished almost without the poet knowing what has happened. Such fits may be separated by long periods of frustration and inactivity, but these are redeemed by the unaccountable moments of creation when all is easy and straightforward and the poet's powers are so controlled by his

IV 9, 11-12. 'Still live the passions that the Aeolian maiden confided to her lyre.'

genius that his words have the peculiar, enchanting and unanalyzable power which Paul Valéry ascribes to 'le vers donné', to the magical verse which somehow seems to come to the poet from an outside power. The second class works in a different way. A 'given' line may come to a poet and provide him with his subject, his tone and his metre, but though the inspiration may last through one or two verses, it then flags and fades and leaves him with the difficult task of completing the poem by what is almost an act of will. He must try many experiments or wait in patience until inspiration returns or refashion what ideas he has until they fit into his ideal plan and conform to its inspired start. This process has been described by A. E. Housman and is familiar to many poets. And in practice we are surely not wrong to think that we can recognize its fruits and distinguish between those lines which come to the poet and those which he makes, between 'le vers donné' and 'le vers calculé'. Valéry quotes as an example the poem of Baudelaire which begins with what is obviously a 'given' line:

La servante au grand cœur dont vous étiez jalouse,
and proceeds with what is no less obviously a 'calculated' line

Et qui dort son sommeil sous un humble pelouse.

Something of the same kind can be seen in other poets. No poet, for instance, has more startling and more inspired beginnings than Donne, but the poems which open with such lines as

I long to talk with some old lover's ghost
Who died before the god of Love was born,

or

When by thy scorn, O murd'ress, I am dead,

do not proceed in the same direct way. They develop complications and complexities; their movement becomes slower and more intellectual; they create in the end an impression different from that suggested at the beginning. Now this is not to say that a poet who works in this way is inferior to one who is carried through a whole poem on a single waft of inspiration. He may have his own successes and his own rewards which are denied those who rely on the inconstant visitations of inspiration, and his work cannot be judged in the same way or by the same standards as theirs.

To this second class Horace almost certainly belongs. His o-

statements show that his composition was partly the result of sudden inspiration, partly of laborious toil. He certainly knew the frenzy of creation; for in his introductory poem he speaks of the Nymphs and Satyrs who draw him away from other men and in another poem he finds in Bacchus his symbol for inspiration, telling how he sees him on the hills and hears his call to song.¹ On the other hand he believed that a poem demands long labour, and he was not joking when he said that it should be kept for nine years.² He compared himself to the bee which flits from flower to flower gathering honey and said that his songs were *operosa*, 'laborious'.³ He was not a singer who relied mainly on inspiration like Sappho or Catullus; he had his own way of working, and it was more like that of Baudelaire or Donne. At times wonderful lines came to him, and he saw how good they were, but he had to supplement them with other lines less easily found. Indeed there are some poems of Horace in which we can almost distinguish the 'given' from the 'calculated' lines. He will start a poem with an overwhelming dash and brilliance, then continue in a different spirit to a different effect. The first wild onslaught yields to something more meditated and more complex. Such at least is the impression made by poems with such beginnings as

O fons Bandusiae, splendidior vitro,⁴

Quid fles, Asterie, quem tibi candidi
primo restituent vere Favonii . . .⁵

Eheu fugaces, Postume, Postume,
labuntur anni . . .⁶

Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero
pulsanda tellus.⁷

There is a directness of approach, a violent sweep, in these openings which is not maintained in the verses which follow. The

¹II, 19. ²*Ars Poetica* 388. ³IV, 2, 27-32.

⁴III, 13, 1. 'O spring of Bandusia, brighter than crystal.'

⁵III, 7, 1. 'Why, Asterie, do you weep for him whom the white West winds will bring back to you when spring begins?'

⁶II, 14, 1. 'Alas, the fleeing years, Postumus, Postumus, are slipping by.'

⁷I, 37, 1. 'Now must we drink, now beat the earth with free foot.'

speed becomes slower, the ideas more intricate, the style more elaborate, the unity of impression less complete. Horace seems to have begun some poems in an almost Dionysiac excitement and then found that to complete them he must summon all the resources of patience, hard work and discriminating selection.

Though this manner of composition must in the first place have been dictated by the special nature of Horace's gifts, it was well in accord with theories current at the time. Roman poets and critics like to distinguish between *ingenium*, or natural talent, and *ars*, or technique. Both were equally important, in that the first must be purified and disciplined by the second. That Horace shared these views is clear from the recipe for poetry which he gives in his *Ars Poetica*. The poet must have natural talent but he must also have enough technique to make proper use of his gifts. For all practical purposes he agreed with the doctrine advanced in the treatise *On the Sublime*, probably a work of the Augustan age that 'the employment of art is in every way a fitting aid to nature for it is the conjunction of the two which tends to ensure perfection.'¹ In a world where such ideas were prevalent Horace matured and developed his art. He felt that he had been born a poet and lisped numbers in his cradle, but he also felt that uninstructed and uncontrolled singing was not enough and that he must modify and discipline his natural talent with all the art that he could summon to his command.

Such a conception imposes its own conditions on those who try to put it into effect. In the first place it demands a strict form. The poet who has to fuse 'given' and 'calculated' verses into harmonious unity gains much from the discipline imposed by a rigid frame. Without it he has no clear field in which to work and no exact standard to follow. Horace was indeed conscious of this when he contrasted his own art with Pindar's. For him Pindar is like a river in spate which carries all before it as it breaks its bounds or like a swan in effortless flight through the air.² Horace did not see himself like this, and it is significant that in his estimate of Pindar he misunderstood the formality of Pindaric verse and thought that it had no rules. He himself needed a strict form and found it in certain Greek metres used by Sappho and Alcaeus. He adapted them with great cunning; for the Latin language was not ideally formed to receive them. Heavier than Greek, with

¹*De Subl.* 36, 3. ²IV, 2, 5 ff.

greater proportion of long syllables, it needed considerable skill to make it absorb these measures. Horace's Sapphics and Alcaics and Asclepiads are indeed more weighty than those of Sappho and Alcaeus. In the Sapphic line especially Horace's introduction of an almost compulsory break after the fifth syllable as in

Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo¹

gives a less airy music than Sappho's various uses of the same metre, and breaks what was once a unity into two separate parts. Nor was this imposed on Horace merely by the nature of Latin; it suited the kind of composition. The slower movement of the line corresponds to the slower march of his poetical moods. It reflects the strong element of meditation, of experience treasured and assimilated, which has gone to his verse. The regularity of Horace's verse-forms and of the movements inside them belong to his special kind of poetry.

In this kind of composition the poet's first task is to secure a perfect harmony between the 'given' and the 'calculated' elements. He must see that what he himself adds to his inspired lines holds its own with them and is not noticeably different in quality. Both Donne and Baudelaire saw this difficulty and met it in their own way by giving so great a variety of content to a poem that they pass easily from one state of mind to another without feeling any disparity between this and that passage. This is an achievement of style. Both poets manage words so well that the most different kinds of experience are harmonized through the individual tone of the language. The result is a special kind of poetry quite unlike the effortless song. The will and intelligence, in alliance with an unerring sensibility, create true poetry, but it is not song. It moves more slowly; its effects are less immediately overwhelming; it is rather, more impressive, and often more various; thought plays a larger part in it; its texture is richer, and its structure more muscular. If it loses in speed and grace, it gains in richness. And this is what Horace's poetry does. It has not the essential fire of Sappho or Catullus, but it has other qualities which they have not, and it gives an entirely different kind of pleasure.

This difference may perhaps be expressed by saying that while the effortless song gives the pleasure of perfect melody, that of the instructed verse relies less on its tune and on creating a single

¹I, 22, 23. 'I shall love sweetly laughing Lalage.'

impression than on a series of small thrills and of individual effect due to the choice and arrangement of words. It reflects not single, all-absorbing moment but something more complex, and it makes its impression by exploiting not one mood but several. The difference can be illustrated by a comparison between the opening lines of two hymns to Diana, one by Catullus and the other by Horace. Catullus writes with a delightful, straightforward charm:

Dianae sumus in fide
puellae et pueri integri:
Dianam pueri integri
puellaeque canamus.¹

This is light and lucid and swift, and it contains a single imaginative experience, the desire of boys and girls to sing of a goddess. Horace opens in quite a different manner:

Dianam tenerae dicite virgines,
intonsum, pueri, dicite Cynthium
Latonamque supremo
dilectam penitus Iovi.²

Not only does Horace treat of three gods instead of one, and thereby make his verse less easy to absorb, but he introduces ideas as Catullus does not, outside the innocent desire to sing. He adds epithets to his deities and makes the attention turn to more than one direction as it follows his movements. The lilt which makes Catullus' poem almost pure song is bound up with the simplicity of his thought; in Horace there is no such lilt because the thought is more elaborate, and the pleasure comes from the richness given to what might otherwise be a simple theme.

Horace's triumph is precisely that he makes his poems rich through countless small touches. While the strict form supplies the music, the words have each a special appeal and charm, power to startle delight through their apt expressiveness. It may have taken Horace as long as it took Flaubert to find the inevitable word, but he always found it, and when it came, it did much more than carry its burden in its own place. It is thrilling, delightful

¹34, 1-4. 'We, girls and chaste boys, are Diana's lieges. Let us, chaste boys and girls, sing of Diana.'

²1, 21, 1-4. 'Praise Diana, tender maidens! Boys, praise unshorn Apollo and Latona deeply loved by highest Jove.'

lifting. To secure this result Horace created his own vocabulary, not indeed so refined and delicate as that of Catullus, but closer in some ways to common speech and to that rhetoric into which the Italian falls so naturally when his emotions are aroused. Less adventurous than Virgil, who hardly ever says a plain thing in plain way, Horace is still adventurous enough in his attempts to give a new life to words by unusual combinations and figures of speech. Above all his words give the impression that they are used for the first time and have not been dulled by habit and repetition. Their almost miraculous aptness catches the attention at once and compels us to see how much they mean. Take, for instance, the opening lines of a poem on the first snow:

Vides ut alta stet nive candidum
Soracte, nec iam sustineant onus
silvae laborantes, geluque
flumina constiterint acuto.¹

Each word is not only straight to the point, but lively and vivid. *Soracte* calls up the outline of the mountain as it stands solidly against the skyline; the heavy *laborantes*, 'straining', conveys the sense of effort in the woods newly laden with snow; *acuto*, 'piercing', is more bold and original than its well-worn English counterpart 'piercing'. And though each word has its own precision and distinction and delights us as we come to it, the whole verse gives no impression of being crowded or heavy. We pass lightly from one point to another and see exactly what Horace wishes to convey. This is what he always does. His words, chosen with unfailing care and insight, never fail to be fresh and alluring, and the result is never laborious.

The choice of individual words is matched by Horace's skill in arranging them and building them into a sentence. Latin, of course, with its highly inflected forms, allows a far greater variety of word-order than is possible in English, but Horace's skill lies in exploiting to the utmost the possibilities of this variety. By separating his adjectives from their nouns, by placing the subject of a sentence in an emphatic position not necessarily at the start, by finding an appropriate place for each word according to its

¹I, 9, 1-4. 'Do you see how Soracte stands, white with deep snow, and how the straining woods no longer endure their load, and the rivers are halted by the piercing frost?'

importance, Horace gives a new dimension to his poetry. His order is not that of natural speech, but, though in some senses it is artificial, its artificiality makes it the more telling. Nothing is idle in this style, and every word carries not only its own colour and individuality but gains something else through its position. Take, for instance, the closing stanza of Horace's poem on the death of Cleopatra:

Deliberata morte ferocior,
saevis Liburnis scilicet invidens
privata deduci superbo
non humilis mulier triumpho.¹

The final, splendid stroke comes in the last line with its contrast between the queen, 'no humble woman', and the hideous humiliation of being led in a Roman triumph. So the most important words are kept for this, and what precedes them prepares the way. Yet even in this preparation the word-order is consummately skilful. In the first line Cleopatra's violent and yet determined decision to kill herself appears in the contrast of *deliberata* and *ferocior*. Then the reasons for this decision are unfolded, and we see that the great queen is not prepared to become a private citizen, *privata*, or to yield her pride to the still greater pride of Rome. The result of such an art is that whole paragraphs stand with a special power because they are so closely welded together. The marmoreal Latin words take on a new life through the exploitation of their resources.

In this poetry surprise plays a considerable part. Just as in his choice of words Horace gives a continual delight by some unexpected and yet inevitably right choice, so in the structure of his poem he keeps us intent and awake by the shifts of his moods and the unforeseen character of his development and his close. On the whole his models, Sappho, Alcaeus and Anacreon, do not do this. They usually allow a single mood to dominate and govern the whole poem. And this is indeed the normal practice of lyric poetry. It strikes its note at the start and keeps it to the end. It aims at reflecting a single, harmonious mood and needs no sudden changes or surprises. Horace, with his far less instinctive outlook

¹I, 37, 29-32. 'In her determined death more bold, scorning indeed to be led no more a queen on Liburnian galleys, no humble woman she, in proud triumph.'

does something different. His originating impulses were perhaps not powerful enough to carry him through a whole poem, and he knew that in actual experience, as he felt it, one mood quickly yields to another. His art reflects the wayward movements of a subtle personality which starts with one view of a subject and then changes to another. He turns these vagaries into a remarkable art. For instance, when Virgil went to Greece, Horace wrote a poem wishing him a good voyage.¹ Such poems were common in antiquity, and there were certain rules to which they were expected to conform. They must wish for fine weather, speak of the traveller's virtues, and try to dissuade him from starting. Horace does all these things, but with a special emphasis which gives them a new character. His poem has, as it were, three movements, each of which may be traced to the traditional rules. But in each Horace does something new. He begins with words of touching affection for his old friend, who is 'half his soul' and asks that he may be safely guided to Greece; then, with a sudden turn, he speaks almost in reprobation of the bold exploits of man and deplores the dangers which they cause; finally he closes not with a denunciation of this bold spirit but with acceptance of it. There is nothing that men will not dare, and he seems to leave it at that. The three movements melt easily into each other, and the poem has a continuous development. It reflects the changing moods of the poet whose emotions are stirred by his friend's departure, Horace often does this kind of thing. It may not be quite what we expect from lyric poetry, but it is entirely consistent with Horace's special art in which variety of mood and the element of surprise play a special part.

By such means Horace gives variety and depth to his poetry, enriching it with many small touches which are outside the scope of unpremeditated song. But this was not his only way of making his poetry rich. He was fully aware of the complexities and mysteries of life and he knew that things are not always what they seem to be. He wished to convey this sense of hidden depths, of unexplored secrets, of unrecognized qualities, and he found to his hand an instrument of the greatest use. In adopting the theology of the Greeks and equating it with their own somewhat shadowy pantheon, the Romans added a great source of riches to their poetry. These gods and goddesses are hardly actual presences as

¹I, 3.

they were to the Greeks; they are symbols of real but indefinable and abstract powers. They can be used to express in concrete form ideas which are otherwise hard to convey because there are no clear words for them. So Horace's Venus is less a goddess than a power of the flesh who unaccountably masters him; his Bacchus is not only the power of wine but the inspiring intoxication which creates poetry; his Hercules is an example of that human spirit, admired by the Stoics, which is lord of itself and therefore of its destiny. So too the great array of Greek stories provided him with many significant examples to illustrate his thought. Instead of having to invent his symbols he found them ready for use, and was able to advance into many new realms with their aid.

By using this material Horace was able to stress the mystery which he found in some of his subjects. Sometimes it has become more mysterious with the years, and we are uncertain to what Horace refers. But this does not spoil the effect. On the contrary it gives to a single occasion a universal character and raises it from history to poetry. For instance Horace writes an impressive poem on the rape of Helen by Paris and tells of the fearful results which will come from it.¹ His words have an oracular and prophetic dignity, and we can hardly doubt that they were written for some important political crisis, perhaps in the years when it was clear that Antony had finally broken with Octavian and would come to a tragic end. The actual occasion is transcended in the old myth which is symbolical of all undertakings doomed to disaster because their leaders have in the frenzy of pride violated the laws and consciences of civilized men. The Greek story and its characters are so familiar that the poem lives in its own right and can be brought into connexion with any situation which has the same elements of effrontery and defeat. The poetry gains by this release from its original subject and passes beyond the limitations of historical time.

This art of symbolical suggestion can be used for different purposes, and sometimes Horace turns it to quite personal ends. His ode to Pyrrha² is, on the face of it, addressed to a beautiful girl whose new lover does not know her wayward character, a character which Horace does from experience. Horace, after a wonderful opening which calls up her air of artless simplicity, builds his poem on a notable image. Pyrrha is as alluring and as inconstant as the sea. Her lover will weep for her changes of mood and faith, and

¹*l.* 15. ²*l.* 5.

wonder at the black winds which sweep across her, though now, in his ignorance of the treacherous wind, he thinks that she will always be calm and lovable. The poem closes with Horace's own experience of Pyrrha. He has put votive-offerings in the sea-god's temple in gratitude for his escape. The whole is conceived with a charming imagination, and it gains in strength because Venus is herself a sea-goddess and resembles the element of her birth in her alternations between magical, golden calm and sudden, cruel storms. The Greek idea is made to live again through this symbolical use of it. Horace's Venus is not the Greek Aphrodite, but she is none the less real, and her ways are those of the sea. By such means Horace enriches his poem with hints and echoes and shows how many possibilities lie half-hidden in such a situation.

The experience which Horace presents through this accomplished, civilized art is that of a man aware of many sides of life. In him many contradictory elements met, and he was too sincere to try to resolve them into a single, consistent system. He was by birth and tastes a countryman but he spent much of his time in Rome; he was of humble origin but circumstances made him a friend of Augustus and of Rome's new rulers; he fought in Brutus' army at Philippi but later became a pillar of the new system. These contradictions in his circumstances were matched by other contradictions in himself. He was now a Stoic, now an Epicurean; he both detested war, making fun of his own experience of it, and praised in noble words the martial achievements of Rome; he liked hospitality and pleasure but claimed that a simple life was the best; he was at once lax in his views about love and a supporter of Augustus' plans to improve sexual morality. Horace was fundamentally an ordinary man with an ordinary man's waywardness and instability on many important issues. But he was not consistent, he was scrupulously honest. He believed what he said when he said it, and his poetry reflects not an imaginary self but his real self in all its discords. He understood the different moods of the human spirit so well that he could give to each its own appropriate poetry which rings true in every word. His range is in consequence much wider than that of Catullus. He used the lyric to cover most aspects of the life which he knew and to show what significant or exciting or exalting elements he found in it. Despite his air of a man of the world, his response

to any emotional or imaginative challenge was strong and sincere. He absorbed experience not merely with sensitive receptivity but with a response so keen and powerful that it deserves the name of passion.

Horace covered so wide a range that at times he could not help touching on light and even trivial themes. But what matters in poetry is not the nature of a theme considered abstractly but what the poet finds in it, and it is astonishing how much Horace found in some situations which might seem in themselves of little importance. His poems on drinking are much more than tributes to the delights of wine; they belong to his poetry of friendship and are nearly always concerned with the release of the affections which comes with wine. So too, though not all his poems about love are inspired by the flame of pure passion, and some have even a perfunctory air as if Horace claimed to be in love because it was expected of him, they have compensating virtues of charm and gaiety, like the delightful lines to Chloe in which he complains that she flees like a frightened fawn, and protests that he is no tiger in pursuit of her¹, or the poem to Lydia in which he proclaims his jealousy of her attentions to Telephus and then closes on a more serious note with his vision of what a constant affection ought to be², or his poem to a 'daughter more beautiful than a beautiful mother'³ in which he playfully points out the error of quarrelling, apologizes for his own harsh words, and asks her to be his friend again. Each situation is real and convincing and has those flashes which turn it into poetry.

The serious and responsible side of Horace's character found its special field of work in Roman political subjects. These poems are usually longer than most of his work, and the presence of six such at the beginning of Book III indicates the emphasis which Horace wished to give to them. In them he exploits his gift for noble aphorism. He is able to present in a few telling words thoughts which lay very deep in the Roman soul. With fine enthusiasm he praised the traditional Roman qualities of simplicity and sacrifice, devotion to duty and love of home. He crystallizes his conclusions into short, pregnant sentences, as when he praises the virtues of Roman breeding:

*fortes creantur fortibus et bonis*⁴,

¹I, 23. ²I, 13. ³I, 16.

⁴IV, 4, 29. 'From the strong and noble strong sons are born.'

the honour of dying for one's country:

*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*¹,

the prosperity brought to the country by Augustus' rule:

nutrit rura Ceres almaque Faustitas.²

these short, almost epigrammatic statements experience is refined and reduced to its essential elements, and the monumental words reflect the Roman temper. The poetry is all the stronger because it is constrained in so narrow a form.

There is real emotion in these Roman poems, even if it is trapped in dignity and majesty. Horace has so fine a sense of occasion that he knows when to reveal his feelings and when to keep them in reserve. There are some topics about which he is not the least shy, and his treatment of them throws a significant light on the workings of his genius. Some things so disturbed him that he could not but write with something akin to violence about them. If his sense of fitness was wounded, he felt a need to inflict wounds in return on the offender. This accounts for some poems, misjudged by modern taste, in which he attacks elderly women who foolishly labour to look young. Here was something which outraged his deepest feelings, and he replied with what is for him unusual sharpness, though it is none the less powerful poetry. One time he mocks Lydia because she lacks the gallants who used to throng round her and throw stones at her window.³ Another time he addresses Lyce in words whose fierce exultation betrays some deeper emotion. He begins by rejoicing over her advancing years. It is, it seems, the answer to some prayer of

*Audivere, Lyce di mea vota, di
audivere, Lyce; fis anus, et tamen
vis formosa videri
ludisque et bibis impudens*.⁴

that he is too honest to keep the whole poem on this note. It is plain that his mockery of Lyce rises from the fact that he was

III, 2, 13, 'It is sweet and fitting to die for fatherland.'

IV, 5, 17. 'Ceres and kindly Plenty nurse the fields.' ³I, 15.

IV, 13, 1-4. 'The gods have heard my prayer, Lyce, the gods have heard, Lyce. You are growing old, and yet you wish to look beautiful, and to play and drink without shame.'

once in love with her, and the memory of this prompts him to speak with an uncommon power :

quo fugit Venus, heu, quove color ? decens
quo motus ? quid habes illius, illius,
quae spirabat amores,
quae me supererat mihi ?¹

What begins with an attack becomes almost a lament, and human feelings of regret and pathos give a new depth.

In these poems we may perhaps detect in Horace a real dislike of finding himself in love. He seems to have felt that it destroyed his calm and order and made him the victim of uncontrollable powers. When he felt the approaches of passion, his first reaction seems to have been scepticism and distrust ; then his honesty would compel him to admit the truth and he would break into words of deep emotion. Such at least is the impression made by one of his poems to Ligurinus. He starts by saying that he is too old for the onslaughts of Venus, and he tries to laugh her off by telling her to visit one of his friends. Then he takes one of his sudden turns, speaks with absolute candour, and ends his poem with words of astonishing beauty and power :

sed cur heu, Ligurine, cur
manat rara meas lacrima per genas ?
cur facunda parum decoro
inter verba cadit lingua silentio ?
nocturnis ego somniis
iam captum teneo, iam volucrem sequor
te per gramina Martii
campi, te per aquas, dure volubiles.²

A little later in the same book Horace addresses another poem to Ligurinus and again protests against his cruelty, but by an extraordinary paradox of poetry Horace seems almost to say one thing

¹ IV, 13, 17-20. 'Where has fled the charm, alas, or where the colour, the comely movement? What have you of her, of her, who breathed love and stole me from myself.'

² IV, 1, 33-40. 'But why, Ligurinus, oh why does a tear flow now and then on my cheeks? why does my eloquent tongue fail with unbecoming silence in the middle of my words? In the dream of night I now hold thee captive, now pursue thee as thou fliest over the grassy Field of Mars, no over the rolling waves, O hard hearted!'

and mean another. He warns Ligurinus that he will soon lose his beauty and bitterly regret that he has not made full use of his opportunities while he can. But this warning is not cruel or triumphant; it breathes a deep compassion, almost a tragic sense of the brevity of youth and its opportunities. It passes beyond its immediate purpose into the poetry of pathetic lament for lost chances. In it each word falls into the enchanting rhythm and beats with compassion and regret:

O crudelis adhuc et Veneris muneribus potens,
 insperata tuae cum veniet bruma superbiae,
 et, quae nunc umeris involitant, deciderint comae,
 nunc et qui color est puniceae flore prior rosae,

mutatus Ligurinum in faciem verterit hispidam,
 dices 'heu' quotiens te speculo vederis alterum,
 'quae mens est hodie, cur eadem non puero fuit,
 vel cur his animis incolumes non redeunt genae?'¹

Such a situation broke down Horace's defences and made him speak with an unusual force and simplicity.

The theme of death is closely allied to the themes of love and fading beauty and affected Horace with no less power. It too broke into his ordered scheme of life and left him anxious and uncertain. The reality of death seems to have been brought home to him by the falling bough of an elm-tree which nearly killed him, and though this may not account for everything, there is no doubt about the strength of Horace's feelings. With a remarkably usual imagination he asks what death really means. He looks all round the subject and marks now this aspect of it, now that. He remembers the old Greek myths of Styx and Tartarus, of sinners condemned to eternal punishment, of Cerberus and the Furies. He covers the whole range of thoughts which men have formed about death in the hope of understanding it and knows that it comes alike to rich and poor, that it forbids us to indulge high

¹ IV, 10. 'O cruel still and lordly with Venus's gifts, when the unexpected winter comes to your pride, and the hair which now floats on your shoulders is fallen, and the bloom that now surpasses the crimson rose has changed and turned into a rough face, then, so often as you look in the mirror at your other self, you will say "Alas! why in boyhood had I not the same purpose as today? Or why to my present spirit do my cheeks not return spoiled?"'

hopes, that it comes whether we call for it or not, that it means not only the loss of earth and home and wife but even of the trees which we have loved, that not even Orpheus' song can give life to the unsubstantial ghost. Nor is it merely the future which is dark and menacing. The constant menace of death destroys the reality of life and makes nonsense of our fears no less than of our desires, of our escapes no less than of our disasters:

frustra cruento Marte carebimus
fractisque rauci fluctibus Hadriae,
frustra per autumnos nocentem
corporibus metuemus Austrum.¹

Death undermines our confidence in life by showing that in the end everything is equally futile before the final darkness.

Yet though this anxiety is never far from Horace's mind and though it inspired some of his finest verses, it is in most of them no more than a background, if it is even so much as that. Against his doubts and fears he set his positive vision of life, of the joy to be snatched from the fleeting hour, of the friendships and devotions which bring contentment and confidence. He did not ask for too much, and his Epicureanism is always wise and moderate. He knows that quiet pleasures are more satisfying than violent sensations and his special gift is to find poetry in many unrenowned activities. It is perhaps true that a gentle, resigned melancholy released his creative powers in a special degree and that his most characteristic utterance is in such a poem as *Diffugeris nives* where the coming of spring turns his thoughts to the cycle of the seasons and the brevity of life. Yet in this there is no real note of complaint; it is true and courageous and has no quarrel with the universe. Horace seems to say that this is what life is and that it is foolish to wish it to be otherwise. This sanity informs Horace's poetry and gives it a peculiar strength. The miracle is that sanity has passed into poetry so fine and so sustained that the four books of the Odes, with their hundred and three short poems, cover a wider range of experience and present it in a more satisfying form than almost any other comparable book written by man.

¹II, 14, 13-16. 'In vain shall we escape from bloody Mars and the broken waves of the loud Adriatic; in vain shall we fear the South wind that brings our bodies harm.'

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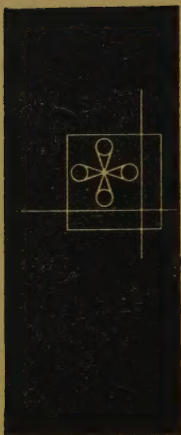
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